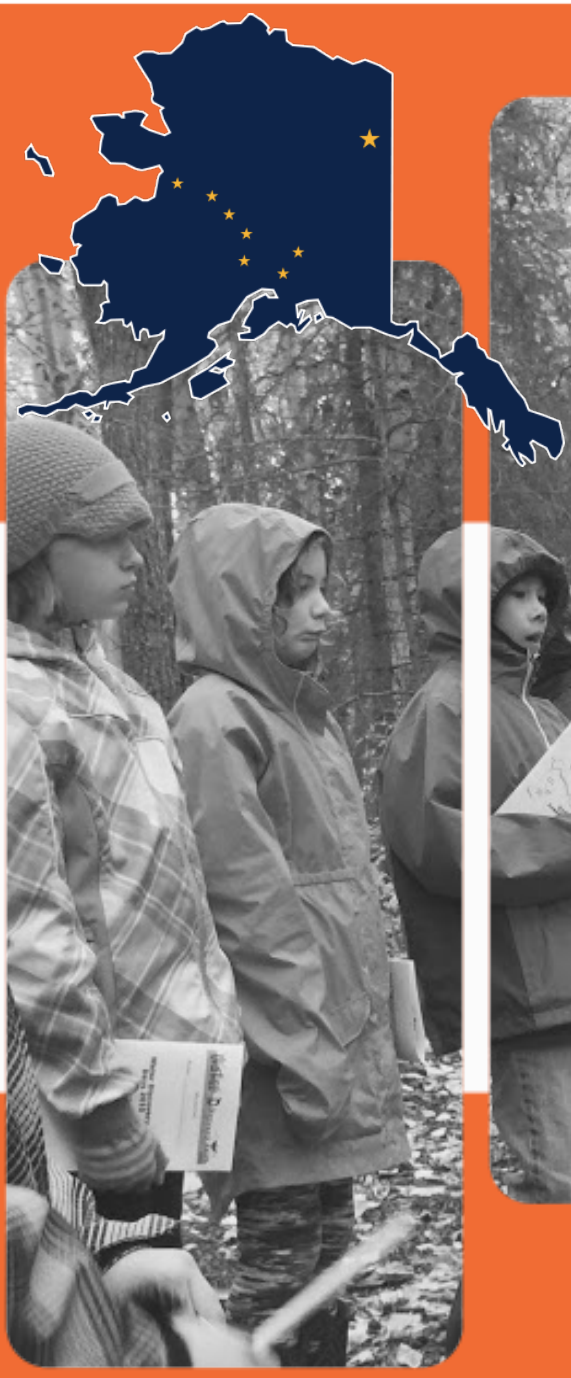


Performance Review of the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development

publicworks
making good ideas work for the better

Public Works LLC • August 8, 2016

Table of Contents

DEED PERFORMANCE REVIEW REPORT 7

Overview 7
Methodology 8
Performance Review Objectives 10
DEED Efforts and Unique Challenges 11
Commendations 17

1 OBJECTIVE 1: MISSION SUCCESS 19

1.1 GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE 26
RECOMMENDATION 1.1.1 30
1.2 ROLE CLARIFICATION OF THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION, BOARD TRAINING, AND BOARD SELF-ASSESSMENT 32
RECOMMENDATION 1.2.1 36
RECOMMENDATION 1.2.2 37
RECOMMENDATION 1.2.3 38
RECOMMENDATION 1.2.4 40
1.3 DEED STRATEGIC PLAN 41
Commendation 1.A 48
RECOMMENDATION 1.3.1 48
1.4 STATE BOARD POLICY MANUAL 52
RECOMMENDATION 1.4.1 53
1.5 COMMISSIONER'S EVALUATION INSTRUMENT 54
RECOMMENDATION 1.5.1 56
RECOMMENDATION 1.5.2 59

2 OBJECTIVE 2: RESULTS-BASED MEASURES 61

2.1 DEED PERFORMANCE MEASURES 62
RECOMMENDATION 2.1.1 67
RECOMMENDATION 2.1.2 72

3 OBJECTIVES 3, 4, AND 10: AUTHORITY, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES, AND STATUTORILY DEFINED DUTIES 75

3.1 RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION 77
RECOMMENDATION 3.1.1 79
RECOMMENDATION 3.1.2 80
RECOMMENDATION 3.1.3 80
RECOMMENDATION 3.1.4 81
3.2 TEACHER EVALUATION 82
RECOMMENDATION 3.2.1 86
3.3 TEACHER CERTIFICATION AND RENEWAL 87
Commendation 3.A 88

3.4 TEACHER CERTIFICATION: NEW CANDIDATES 88
RECOMMENDATION 3.4.1 90
RECOMMENDATION 3.4.2 91
RECOMMENDATION 3.4.3 92
3.5 STATE SYSTEM OF SUPPORT AND BASE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT 93
RECOMMENDATION 3.5.1 97
RECOMMENDATION 3.5.2 102
3.6 TOPIC: STATUTORY REQUIREMENT FOR MINIMUM INSTRUCTIONAL SPENDING 106
RECOMMENDATION 3.6.1 108
3.7 ALASKA SAFE CHILDREN'S ACT IMPLEMENTATION 110
Commendation 3.B 112

4 OBJECTIVES 5 AND 6: AREAS OF OVERLAP AND INTERAGENCY COOPERATION 113

4.1 DEED COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS 115
Commendation 4.A 118
4.2 PERFORMANCE OF DEED PARTNERSHIPS 118
RECOMMENDATION 4.2.1 119
4.3 CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION (CTE) PARTNERSHIP 121
Commendation 4.B 124
RECOMMENDATION 4.3.1 124
4.4 PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN DEED AND THE UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA 125
RECOMMENDATION 4.4.1 126
RECOMMENDATION 4.4.2 127
RECOMMENDATION 4.4.3 128
4.5 DEED PARTNERSHIPS: ACCOUNTABILITY AND OVERLAP 128
RECOMMENDATION 4.5.1 129
4.6 AGENCY PARTNERSHIPS: EARLY CHILDHOOD INITIATIVES 130
Commendation 4.C 133
4.7 POOLED PURCHASING FOR LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS 134
RECOMMENDATION 4.7.1 136
RECOMMENDATION 4.7.2 137
4.8 STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATIONS IMPROVEMENTS 138
Commendation 4.D 139
4.9 STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATIONS: MISSION, VISION, AND GOALS 139
RECOMMENDATION 4.9.1 141
RECOMMENDATION 4.9.2 141
RECOMMENDATION 4.9.3 141
RECOMMENDATION 4.9.4 141
RECOMMENDATION 4.9.5 142

5 OBJECTIVE 7: COMPLAINTS 145

5.1 OPEN RECORDS REQUESTS 145
Commendation 5.A 146
5.2 COMPLAINTS PROCESS 146
Commendation 5.B 148
RECOMMENDATION 5.2.1 148

RECOMMENDATION 5.2.2 152
RECOMMENDATION 5.2.3 154

6 OBJECTIVE 8: TECHNOLOGY 157

6.1 OPT-IN STATEWIDE STUDENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (SIS) AND INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP) SYSTEM 159
RECOMMENDATION 6.1.1 160
6.2 SUPPORT FOR CRITICAL DEED SYSTEMS 162
RECOMMENDATION 6.2.1 163
RECOMMENDATION 6.2.2 163
RECOMMENDATION 6.2.3 164
6.3 DISTRICT AND SCHOOL-BASED BROADBAND CONNECTION (BANDWIDTH) 164
RECOMMENDATION 6.3.1 167
6.4 TECHNOLOGY-ENHANCED COMMUNICATIONS 168
RECOMMENDATION 6.4.1 169
6.5 STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION 169
RECOMMENDATION 6.5.1 171
6.6 COMPREHENSIVE DATA STRATEGY (ARCHITECTURE) 172
RECOMMENDATION 6.6.1 173
6.7 STATE REPORT MANAGER (SRM): 174
Commendation 6.A 174
RECOMMENDATION 6.7.1 174
6.8 PORTAL STRATEGY 175
RECOMMENDATION 6.8.1 175
6.9 OFFICE 365 INITIATIVE 176
Commendation 6.B 176
RECOMMENDATION 6.9.1 176
6.10 TOPIC: DATA CENTER CONSOLIDATION AND DISASTER RECOVERY RECIPROCITY 177
Commendation 6.C 177
RECOMMENDATION 6.10.1 177
6.11 PULL PLANNING PROCESS IN THE LIBRARIES, ARCHIVES, AND MUSEUMS DIVISION (LAM) 179
Commendation 6.D 179
RECOMMENDATION 6.11.1 179

7 OBJECTIVE 9: CONSOLIDATIONS OR REDUCTIONS 181

7.1 CONSOLIDATION OF PROFESSIONAL TEACHING PRACTICES COMMISSION (PTPC) 181
RECOMMENDATION 7.1.1 183
RECOMMENDATION 7.1.2 184
RECOMMENDATION 7.1.3 185

8 OBJECTIVE 11: CAPITAL PROJECTS 187

8.1 CAPITAL PROJECTS REVIEW PROCESS 188
Commendation 8.A 190
8.2 PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS 190
Commendation 8.B 192

8.3 PROJECT APPLICATION PROCESS 192
RECOMMENDATION 8.3.1 194
8.4 PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE 195
RECOMMENDATION 8.4.1 198
RECOMMENDATION 8.4.2 199
8.5 POTENTIAL CHANGES TO THE CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESS 200
RECOMMENDATION 8.5.1 201
RECOMMENDATION 8.5.2 202

9 OBJECTIVES 12 AND 13: BUDGET REDUCTIONS PROPOSED BY DEED AND REPORTED PRIORITIES AND PROGRAMS 203

9.1 PROPOSED BUDGET REDUCTIONS 206
RECOMMENDATION 9.1.1 211
9.2 DEED PRIORITIES AND PROGRAMS 215

10 OBJECTIVE 14: OTHER ELEMENTS 219

10.1 FOOD SERVICES: FUNDING 219
Commendation 10.A 221
10.2 FOOD SERVICES: PARTICIPATION 221
Commendation 10.B 222
10.3 TRANSPORTATION: DRIVER TRAINING 222
RECOMMENDATION 10.3.1 224
10.4 TRANSPORTATION: COST-EFFICIENCY 225
RECOMMENDATION 10.4.1 226
10.5 PROGRAM EVALUATION 226
RECOMMENDATION 10.5.1 228
10.6 DIVISION OF LIBRARIES, ARCHIVES, AND MUSEUMS (LAM) 230
Commendation 10.C 231
10.7 LAM: INTERNAL COORDINATION 231
RECOMMENDATION 10.7.1 232
RECOMMENDATION 10.7.2 235
10.8 ARCHIVES SECTION AND RECORDS INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SERVICES (RIMS) 235
Commendation 10.D 237
10.9 NEW STATE LAM BUILDING 237
Commendation 10.E 239
10.10 NEW STATE LAM BUILDING: FACILITIES RENTALS 239
RECOMMENDATION 10.10.1 240
10.11 COORDINATION OF LAM & DEED SERVICES 241
RECOMMENDATION 10.11.1 244
10.12 LIBRARIES ARCHIVES AND MUSEUMS: TALKING BOOK CENTER 246
Commendation 10.F 246
10.13 CHART OF ACCOUNTS 246
RECOMMENDATION 10.13.1 248
RECOMMENDATION 10.13.2 248
10.14 PERFORMANCE OF MOUNT EDGECUMBE HIGH SCHOOL (MEHS) 250
Commendation 10.G 251

10.15 MEHS STRATEGIC PLAN 251
RECOMMENDATION 10.15.1 254
RECOMMENDATION 10.15.2 255
RECOMMENDATION 10.15.3 255
10.16 SPECIAL EDUCATION AND ACCESSIBILITY AT MEHS 255
RECOMMENDATION 10.16.1 257
10.17 ADMISSIONS CRITERIA AT MEHS 257
RECOMMENDATION 10.17.1 260
10.18 MEHS AND SHARED SERVICES WITH SITKA SCHOOL DISTRICT (SSD) 261
RECOMMENDATION 10.18.1 262
10.19 MEHS AQUATICS CENTER 263
RECOMMENDATION 10.19.1 263
10.20 MEHS GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE 264
RECOMMENDATION 10.20.1 267

APPENDIX A: SURVEY 269

APPENDIX B: PEER STATE ANALYSIS 313

APPENDIX C: ACRONYM DEFINITIONS 337

APPENDIX D: LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS BY TIER AND LEGISLATIVE ACTION REQUIRED 343

APPENDIX E: LIST OF DEED COMMENDATIONS 353

APPENDIX F: DEED RESPONSE 357

APPENDIX G: ADDITIONAL COMMENTS 385

This page intentionally left blank.

DEED PERFORMANCE REVIEW REPORT

Overview

In 2013, the Alaska State Legislature passed House Bill 30 (Chapter 19, SLA 2013) requiring the Division of Legislative Audit (DLA) to facilitate performance reviews of all state departments at least once every ten years. In June 2015, a competitive solicitation, Request for Proposal: RFP No. 15-33-11 A Performance Review of the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) was issued to select a contractor with subject matter expertise and knowledge of the performance review process to conduct a performance review of DEED. A performance review is a systematic assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of an organization. *Effectiveness* is a measure of the degree to which an organization is successful in producing a desired result. *Efficiency* is a measure of productivity, whereby waste and expense are minimized. DLA selected Public Works, LLC to conduct the DEED performance review, with subcontractor JJC and Associates, LLC managing the project.

Comprehensive measurement of efficiency and effectiveness in the context of DEED required using indicators at multiple levels; incorporating information about schools and districts; and, where possible, including state and federal regulations and policies. Rigorous measurement also required data that reflect the inputs, processes, and outcomes of education.

A performance review is not an audit that checks to ensure money is spent according to acceptable accounting practices. A performance review provides information and data that produces recommendations that should improve the organization's performance. The review looks at how efficient and effective DEED's processes, procedures, organizational structure, and technology are operating. While these recommendations generally include some discussion of how they can be implemented, detailed implementation planning is beyond the scope of this report. The DEED performance review report is submitted to the Legislative Budget and Audit Committee (LBAC) for review. The report identifies, where appropriate, the benefits, costs, and challenges of any change proposed by the review team.

The performance review included the evaluation of the following DEED divisions:

- Teaching and Learning Support including K-12 Support Programs;

- School Finance and Facilities;
- Administrative Services;
- Libraries, Archives, and Museums;
- Mt. Edgecumbe High School;
- State Board of Education and Early Development;
- Alaska State Professional Teaching Practices Commission; and
- Alaska State Council of the Arts.

Methodology

Public Works reviewed DEED's core services including a number of documents related to Alaska public school funding; fiscal accountability, compliance, and oversight; school effectiveness programs; active partnerships with other public and private entities concerned with education; and oversight of Alaska's academic resources, and other special programs. Public Works provided an objective and thorough examination of the department's performance in fulfilling its statutory obligations and stated mission across all core services. The process included identification of areas where departmental operations could be streamlined to increase efficiency and reduce costs, while continuously improving the quality of the standards-based education provided to the youth of Alaska.

The Public Works review team requested and analyzed hundreds of documents in support of the review, including those concerning DEED's strategic plan, State Board structure, State Board policies and procedures, staff responsibilities, operations, personnel, management systems, and other divisions and functions under review. The review team analyzed data including, but not limited to, strategic plans, State Board documents, data on performance measures, performance metrics, and workload/productivity measures, operational policies, procedures, and processes and relevant statutes or regulations, organizational structure, and staffing of key DEED divisions.

Site visits to eight school districts were conducted in the months of November 2015 as well as in January and February 2016. These visits included a minimum of one district in each of the five regions of Alaska, in both rural and urban areas. The school district site visits included central office interviews, focus groups of administrators and staff, and tours of a number of schools within each district.

Additionally, members of the review team attended the Alaska Association of School Business Officials (ALASBO) Conference in December 2015 to interview numerous school district business officials. The review team also listened to the October 2015 State Board Meeting by teleconference.

Public Works conducted over 250 individual interviews. These included interviews with DEED management and staff; a majority of State Board members; selected state senators and representatives; leaders of statewide organizations such as the Alaska Superintendents Association (ASA), Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA), Alaska Association of Elementary School Principals (AAESP), Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals, (AASSP), Alaska Association of School Business Officials (ALASBO), Alaska Staff Development Network (ASDN), and Alaska Commission on Post-Secondary Education (ACPE); leaders from the University of Alaska; and other statewide partners. Interviews were also conducted with the recipients of the state's superintendent, principal, and teacher of the year awards.

The review team also conducted numerous focus groups both at DEED and in the school districts. Surveys of DEED professional staff and all 54 school district superintendents were conducted. The DEED staff survey response rate was 67 percent and the district superintendent survey response rate was 83 percent. Full survey results can be found in **Appendix A.**

Two public hearings were held to gain input from the public. The Public Works review team conducted three onsite visits to DEED, in October 2015, November 2015, and January 2016.

Best practices research was conducted on a wide variety of topics including, but not limited to, the organization of education departments in other states, State Board policies and procedures, strategic planning, performance measures, teacher certification, teacher evaluation, technology strategies, and professional teaching practices. Best practice sources included:

- Baldridge criteria for excellence;
- Peer State Department of Education resources;
- National Board for Professional Teaching Standards;
- Southern Regional Education Board (SREB);
- State accountability systems and school improvement measures;

- Chief Council for State School Officers (CCSSO);
- The National Association of State Boards (NASBE);
- Education Commission of the States (ECS): and
- The US Department of Education What Works Clearinghouse.

DEED staff and Public Works agreed upon the peer states to be used in the peer comparison report. Based on a number of criteria, the four states selected were Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, and South Dakota. Full peer state comparisons can be found in **Appendix B.** When states other than these are referenced in the report, the reason for the comparison is included in the relevant discussion.

The full report provides a total of 77 recommendations. Each recommendation is labeled as a Tier 1, Tier 2, or Tier 3 recommendation. This refers to the suggested level of importance or urgency of the implementation of the recommendation.

Tier 1: Greatest Impact: DEED should implement these recommendations immediately to optimize its efficiency and effectiveness.

Tier 2: Moderate Impact: DEED should implement these recommendations as soon as practical to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its operations and programs.

Tier 3: Minimal Impact: DEED should implement these recommendations when time and funds are available as best suits the needs of the department.

The Public Works review team met with the management team at DEED on March 31, 2016 to review and discuss the report's preliminary findings and recommendations. Comments and additional data received as a result of the meeting have been incorporated into the report, where appropriate.

Performance Review Objectives

The performance review was guided by the fourteen objectives set forth in the scope of work established by DLA. The report is organized by objectives with detailed findings and recommendation under each. Due to overlap and similarities in some objectives, the report combines some of the 14 objectives into one section. For example, objectives three, four, and ten are combined; five and six are combined; and 12 and 13 are combined. Objective 14 provides findings

and recommendations that do not fit under any of the other objectives; the section has additional findings and recommendations that should, if implemented, increase the efficiency and effectiveness of DEED.

DEED Efforts and Unique Challenges

The Public Works report also identifies a number of areas where DEED is performing well, implementing best practices, and addressing inefficiencies. Those areas include:

- The State Board of Education's work on initiating a more robust and visible strategic plan;
- DEED's successful implementation of the requirements of the Alaska Safe Children's Act (HB44);
- DEED's strong partnerships with other state entities to improve its Career and Technical Education initiatives;
- Formal complaint processing in a timely and appropriate manner;
- Significant improvement in DEED's Teacher Certification section;
- DEED's use of software tools for improving data collections from districts; and
- DEED's efforts to improve food and nutrition services to districts.

Alaska faces unique challenges in providing efficient and effective services to its member school districts. Those challenges include, but are not limited to the following:

- Of Alaska's 54 school districts, the largest five enroll 71.3 percent of Alaska's students, and the largest seven enroll 78.2 percent, while 39 school districts each enroll less than one percent of the student population.
- Alaska has a large number of very small schools, each with only a handful of teachers. Of 507 schools, 123 schools have fewer than 50 students and

78 enroll 25 or fewer students. More than half of the total schools (298, or 58.7 percent) are Title IA schools. Three or fewer teachers are employed in 87 (17 percent) of the total schools (38 schools employ one teacher; 25 schools employ two teachers; and 37 schools employ three teachers).

- Alaska faces a key challenge in ensuring that its educational leaders have an understanding of the culture of Alaska Native students, and that teachers are well equipped with the necessary cross-cultural knowledge and skills (including linguistic skills) to effectively teach Alaska Native students in a way that is relevant and appropriate to their communities. Alaska has 29,450 Alaska Native students out of a total K-12 enrollment of more than 131,882 (or 22.3 percent). With the inclusion of 1,693 American Indian students, the total Alaska Native/American Indian enrollment is 31,143 (or 23.6 percent of the total student population). In many villages, English is not the primary language. Alaska is home to at least 20 distinct indigenous languages. The challenge for DEED is to ensure that educational leaders acknowledge the state's tremendous diversity, and that teachers are well prepared to teach to in a cross-cultural context.

- Alaska further faces the challenge of retaining qualified educators and educational leaders who are prepared to teach in villages and areas that are geographically remote from the state's population centers and from urban infrastructure. Between 2013 and 2015, 30 (55.5 percent) of Alaska districts had a new superintendent, while of all schools, 88 (17 percent) had a turnover rate of 30 percent or higher.

- Alaska faces higher costs and more complicated logistics than those faced by other states for delivering education and professional development, and for transporting students, staff, and technical support professionals. This is because most of Alaska's schools are located in remote regions, many with no roads or other nearby education opportunities for children. For example:

    - The North Slope Borough School District, with an enrollment of fewer than 2,050 students attending 11 schools, is the nation's largest geographic school district, covering 88,000 square miles. The schools are not connected by roads. If the North Slope were an individual state, it would be our nation's 11th largest.

- The Lower Kuskokwim School District, with an enrollment of 4,285 Yup'ik Eskimo students attending 28 schools, covers 23,792 square miles, an area roughly the size of Maryland, Vermont, and Connecticut combined. The schools are not connected by roads.

- Kenai Peninsula Borough School District is one of the major "urban" organized school districts in Alaska. It enrolls 9,150 students in 43 schools in 17 communities in a geographic area covering 25,600 square miles, larger than Rhode Island, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire combined. Four villages in the district do not have road access.

- Yukon-Koyukuk School District, with 10 schools and a student body of 283, and an additional 1,212 students enrolled in its statewide correspondence school program, encompasses nearly 62,000 square miles in Interior Alaska. Two communities have road access. If this district were a state, it would be the 21st largest in the nation.[1]

Defined in Alaska Constitution Article 7, Sec. 1; AS 14.17, the mission of DEED is to ensure high-quality standards-based instruction to improve academic achievement for all students. DEED provides four core services:

1. Public School Funding
2. Fiscal Accountability, Compliance and Oversight
3. School Effectiveness Programs
4. Active Partnerships

Six distinct themes emerged from the performance review and were identified by the Public Works review team. Each presents an area of challenge for the department:

1. Lack of clarity with regard to mission, vision, and strategic plan;
2. Local control balanced with the need for state leadership and technical assistance;
3. High staff turnover;
4. Insufficient use of data to drive decision-making;

[1] Unique Challenges Facing Alaska, Division of Teaching and Learning document provided by DEED, 2016.

5. Technology challenges; and
6. Lack of proactive engagement with the legislature to provide the data and information needed to garner appropriate funding and support for various education initiatives.

The review team found that DEED has done an adequate job of ensuring that funding is appropriately distributed to districts based on legislative appropriation, by statute, and in accordance with the foundation formula, other formula programs, or legislative intent for funding outside the primary funding formulas. We did not find any major issues with the department's management of state, federal, and other funding by providing comprehensive fiscal and administrative services.

However, the review team recommends that the State Board of Education and DEED finalize the new strategic plan to ensure there is clarity and focus to DEED's core mission and goals. This is particularly important to ensure the effective implementation of School Effectiveness Programs. The strategic plan used in the past has not provided DEED management or staff with clear, specific, measurable, and realistic goals. Additionally, the state is lacking a clear vision in its strategic plan for innovative use of technology to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of educational opportunities and operational functions. Public Works provides several recommendations to address this gap under the discussion of Objective 8.

Three significant areas in which the review team found DEED to be deficient in accomplishing its mission are: (1) communicating a clear and coherent mission, vision, and strategic plan; (2) maximizing opportunities for collaboration and active partnerships with government entities, and other public and private organizations in pursuit of state educational goals; and (3) assisting school districts by providing programs, technical on-site and distance-delivery support, and early intervention services in efforts to increase the statewide graduation rate. The review team provides several recommendations to address these deficiencies.

The review team recommends that the State Board and DEED include an explicit statement in its revised mission and strategic plan to clarify whether DEED's vision is to be a compliance organization, a service organization, or a combination of

both. The review team found that DEED's activities are primarily focused on compliance.

While many of the units within DEED provide high-quality services, there is a "cry" from many districts (particularly rural districts) for more technical assistance, professional development, and training. A common theme throughout many interviews was that DEED is not responsible for assisting districts in many of the areas in which they need assistance. We received responses from DEED staff such as, *That is not DEED's responsibility, that is a district's issue; with local control, DEED doesn't get involved in district issues.* The review team noted a dynamic of "finger-pointing" between DEED staff and some districts with respect to challenges faced by local districts, apparently stemming from lack of clarity about the meaning of local control and the degree to which DEED is responsible for providing technical assistance and support to the districts.

As illustrated in **Appendix B**, Alaska has higher than average total revenue, per pupil spending, and teacher salaries in comparison with selected peer states, but disappointingly, has lower test scores and graduation rates. This discrepancy underlines the need for state support in struggling schools.

Significant gaps in achievement exist among subgroups of Alaskan students, evidenced in state assessment scores and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Alaska's two largest racial/ethnic groups are white students (about 50 percent) and American Indian/Alaska Native students (about 25 percent). There are achievement level gaps between white students and all other racial/ethnic groups, but the largest gaps are between white students and American Indian/Alaska Native students. American Indian/Alaska Native students consistently trail other subgroups on NAEP (see **Recommendation 3.5.1** for more information on the state's system of support for low performing schools.) Alaska Native boys perform the lowest in the country on NAEP. The plight of these students is evident in the subgroup analysis of scores.

Despite overall dissatisfaction with the state's student achievement outcomes, the review team's findings reveal that there is not a united front to hold *all* parties responsible and accountable for continuous improvement in student performance and for providing the support structures needed to operate efficient and effective districts and schools.

The review team acknowledges that implementation of the various elements of a well-developed strategic plan is contingent upon legislative support. Consequently, the Public Works review team recommends that DEED continue to develop and cultivate stronger ongoing communications with legislative leaders and other supporters of education in Alaska. This ongoing and focused activity may lead to more effective deployment of resources that particularly target non-compliance related goals, objectives, and programs.

The review team's findings suggest that DEED' has become primarily a compliance and monitoring organization. Most DEED leaders and staff recognize this and would like to provide more direct services to the districts; however, the majority of DEED staff hold federally-funded positions with specific requirements. Thus, while the former DEED strategic plan included the aim of being more service-oriented, DEED has only been able to partially fulfill its mission and goals.

The review found that DEED is more heavily focused on compliance than its peer state education agencies due to its large number of federally funded positions (relative to the size of the department). Additionally, DEED is heavily focused on state-mandated programs initiated by the Alaska State Legislature. As one leader at DEED articulated it, *We would like to be more service-oriented, but frankly if the program or initiative is not mandated, we know that [the] legislature will not fund it*. DEED's role has become primarily one of administering state and federal funds; the agency has been compelled to focus on compliance with the law and mandates rather than on how best to help districts and schools increase student achievement.

While vital to DEED, federal funding is dispersed to the agency with restrictions. It is strictly tied to specific programs and employees, and the commissioner has little control over how the funds are allocated. As a result, offices within DEED are in many cases "siloes" with little to no interaction between federal- and state-salaried employees. The review team encourages the new commissioner of education to carefully review these findings when considering how best to reorganize the agency. Agencies organized around funding streams, rather than function struggle with coherence and effectiveness.[2] The study finds that while districts appreciate the flexibility of local control, they (particularly the rural

[2] http://www.bscpcenter.org/resources/publications/Solutions_Issue_4_Functional_Coherence_in_SEA.pdf

districts) are requesting more technical assistance, training, and guidance from DEED, not only in improving student achievement, but also in addressing operational challenges.

The review team found that DEED faces challenges working with some local leadership when confronted with persistently low-performing schools. If changes in the state's system of support (see **Recommendations 3.5.1 and 3.5.2**) do not result in significant improvement in student achievement and graduation rates in low-performing schools, the Alaska State Legislature should consider granting DEED the authority to take over consistently failing schools and districts (now allowed under federal law). The threat of state takeover is a powerful lever to incite change at the local level, and can empower local superintendents and school boards that are pushing for reform. The Public Works review team acknowledges that taking over a school or district is a complex undertaking, and DEED must carefully build and assess its capacity to do so successfully before considering such action. If there is to be significant improvement in student outcomes in poor-performing districts/schools, it will be imperative that the State Board and the Alaska State Legislature support and fund these efforts.

In summary, the review team finds DEED to be only partially successful in achieving its mission through effectively and efficiently delivering its core services, goals, programs, and objectives. Much remains to be accomplished, including the completion of a focused strategic plan for DEED and a re-thinking of DEED's methods of delivering services to school districts. DEED's success, however, is also dependent upon the legislature's support for a data-driven approach to improving the educational opportunities for all Alaska public school students. The recommendations of the Public Works review team are intended to assist the state in carrying out its constitutional mission to ensure quality standards-based instruction to improve academic achievement for all students.

Commendations

In addition to recommendations, the Public Works report also identifies a number of areas where DEED is performing well, implementing best practices, and currently working to address inefficiencies. The Public Works report also identifies a number of areas where DEED is performing well, implementing best practices, and addressing inefficiencies. Those commendations include:

- The State Board of Education's work on initiating a more robust and visible strategic plan;

- DEED's successful implementation of the requirements of the Alaska Safe Children's Act (HB44);

- DEED's strong partnerships with other state entities to improve its Career and Technical Education initiatives;

- Formal complaint processing in a timely and appropriate manner;

- Significant improvement in DEED's Teacher Certification section;

- DEED's use of software tools for improving data collections from districts; and

- DEED's efforts to improve food and nutrition services to districts.

1 OBJECTIVE 1: MISSION SUCCESS

Objective 1: Evaluate DEED's success in achieving its mission through effectively and efficiently delivering its core services, goals, programs, and objectives.

Overview and Summary of Findings

According to AS 14.03.015, the purpose of state-sponsored education is to help ensure that 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.

Defined in Alaska Constitution Article 7, Sec. 1; AS 14.17, the mission of DEED is to ensure quality standards-based instruction to improve academic achievement for all students. DEED has four core services:

- **Public School Funding**
  Ensure funding is appropriately distributed to recipients based on legislative appropriation and by statute and in accordance with the foundation formula, other formula programs, or legislative intent for funding outside the primary funding formulas.

- **Fiscal Accountability, Compliance, and Oversight**
  Ensure the department effectively and efficiently manages state, federal and other funding by providing comprehensive fiscal and administrative services.

- **School Effectiveness Programs**
  Assist school districts by providing programs, technical on-site and distance-delivery support, and early intervention services in efforts to increase the statewide graduation rate.

- **Active Partnerships**
  Provide opportunities for, and collaborate with government entities, and other public and private organizations to engage in Active Partnerships in pursuit of state educational goals.

Overall, the Public Works review team found a lack of clarity and agreement within DEED as to what DEED's mission and strategic plan consist of and, therefore, the team found DEED to only be partially successful in the full accomplishment of its mission.

The review team found that DEED has done an adequate job of ensuring that funding is appropriately distributed to recipients based on legislative appropriation and by statute and in accordance with the foundation formula, other formula programs, or legislative intent for funding outside the primary funding formulas. The review team did not find any major issues with the department's management of state, federal, and other funding by providing comprehensive fiscal and administrative services.

However, the review team recommends that the State Board of Education and DEED finalize the new strategic plan to ensure there is clarity and focus to DEED's core mission and goals. This is particularly important to ensure the effective implementation of School Effectiveness Programs. The strategic plan used in the past has not provided DEED management or staff with clear, specific, measurable, and realistic goals. Failure to align work efforts and funding to an organization's strategic aims diminishes the prospect of achieving goals and performance targets. Furthermore, discordant practices and unaligned deployment of resources send mixed signals to districts and schools. Finally, such failures in aligned activity, when they occur, are a breach of public faith.

Additionally, the state is lacking a clear vision in its strategic plan for innovative use of technology to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of educational opportunities and operation functions. Public Works provides several recommendations to address this gap later in the Objective 8 section analysis. The review team commends the State Board for including the goal of modernizing the state's educational system in its new strategic plan goals.

Two significant areas in which the review team found DEED to be deficient in accomplishing its mission are: (1) assisting school districts by providing programs, on-site and distance-delivery technical support, and early intervention services to increase the statewide graduation rate; and (2) maximizing opportunities for collaboration and active partnerships with government entities and other public and private organizations in pursuit of state educational goals.

The review team recommends that the State Board and DEED include an explicit statement in its revised mission and strategic plan to clarify whether DEED's goal is to be a compliance organization, a service organization, or a combination of both. The review team found that DEED's activities are primarily focused on compliance.

While many of the units within DEED are providing quality services, there is a "cry" from many districts (particularly rural districts) for more technical assistance, professional development, and training. A common theme throughout many interviews was that DEED is not responsible for assisting districts in many of the areas in which they need assistance. We received responses from DEED staff such as, *That is not DEED's responsibility; that is a district's issue; with local control, DEED doesn't get involved in district issues*. The review team noted a dynamic of "finger-pointing" between DEED staff and some districts with respect to challenges faced by local districts, apparently stemming from lack of clarity about the meaning of local control and the degree to which DEED is responsible for providing technical assistance and support to the districts.

There is overall dissatisfaction with the state's student achievement outcomes, yet the review team's findings reveal that there is not a united front to hold *all* parties responsible and accountable for continuous improvement in student performance and for providing the support structures needed to operate efficient and effective districts and schools.

The review team acknowledges that implementation of the various elements of a well-developed strategic plan is contingent on legislative support. Several recommendations will require working to properly inform the legislature of the specific needs of the department and/or will also require legislative action for implementation. See **Appendix D** for a list of the recommendations that will require legislative action. Consequently, the Public Works review team recommends that DEED continue to develop and cultivate ongoing communications with legislative leaders and other supporters of education in Alaska. This ongoing and focused activity may lead to more effective deployment of resources that particularly target non-compliance goals, objectives, and programs.

The specific roles of state education agencies (SEAs) have resulted from state legislatures' responsibility to provide an adequate educational system. State

education departments serve not only to interpret and to facilitate the development of educational legislation, but also to observe its effects and to implement legislative mandates relating to education.

Ideally, SEAs should observe the school systems in operation and advise the legislatures of desirable changes and regulations. State departments of education are needed to provide both voluntary technical assistance and services as well as services mandated by the state and federal government. The goal of an effective SEA is to unite the educational forces within each state.

The review team's findings suggest that DEED has become primarily a compliance and monitoring organization. DEED leaders and staff recognize this as well and would like to provide more direct services to the districts; however, the majority of DEED staff are federally funded positions with specific requirements that must be met. Thus, while the former DEED strategic plan included being more service-oriented, DEED has only been able to partially fulfill its mission and goals.

According to a 2011 report produced by the Broad Foundation and the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, each SEA has four major roles: regulation, operation, administration of special services, and leadership of the state program.

1. **Regulation.** The regulatory role consists of: (1) determining that basic administrative duties have been performed by local schools in compliance with state and local laws; (2) ascertaining that public school funds are employed properly; (3) enforcing health and safety rules for construction and maintenance of buildings; (4) enforcing and determining the proper qualifications and licensing of teachers and educational personnel; (5) ensuring that minimum educational opportunities are provided for all children through enforcement of compulsory school laws and child labor laws, and through pupil personnel services; (6) ensuring and monitoring the development of state educational standards and student performance measures and ascertaining that required procedures are used; and (7) ensuring that schools are organized according to the law. The regulatory function of all state departments of education is based on the acceptance of the fact that education is a state function and that local school districts have limited authority to act, except as state laws permit.

2. **Operation.** Operational roles of state education departments vary greatly from state to state. There is a general trend away from having the state department of education conduct direct operational functions. Historically, states have accepted responsibility for the operation of educational agencies and services when no other agency could provide the necessary statewide direction, especially during the developmental stages of a particular program or enterprise. A state education department may operate teachers colleges, schools and services for students with disabilities, trade and correspondence schools, and agencies or institutions of a cultural nature (e.g., state libraries, museums, archives, historical agencies).

3. **Administration of Special Services.** The state's role in the administration of special services developed in response to a need for statewide uniformity and efficiency in educational services. The state offers centralized services that improve education in general (e.g., teacher placement and retirement programs), and it provides services that, because of their scope, technical nature, or expense, can better be offered on a statewide basis (e.g., library services, centralized insurance, financial services, control of interscholastic athletics, statewide testing). The state also provides local school districts, the legislature, the executive office, and the general public with basic information about the status of education, such as comparative studies and statistical information and clarification of all statutes, rules, and regulations on education. As in the case of operational services, the state maintains administrative services only if they are not available through another institution or agency.

4. **Leadership.** According to the Council of Chief State School Officers, the important leadership functions of a state department of education include conducting long-range studies for planning the state program of education, studying ways of improving education, providing consultant services and advice in all areas of education, encouraging cooperation and promoting the proper balance among all units of the educational system, informing the public of educational needs and progress and encouraging public support and participation, and providing in-service education for all persons in the state engaged in educational work.

Commissioners of education are currently subject to intense public scrutiny because of sweeping education reforms over the past decade, including

dramatic statewide actions related to standardized testing, accountability, teacher evaluation and tenure, academic standards, charter schools, and failing schools. States are under pressure to find ways to implement ambitious new federal legislation or pursue fundamental change when it comes to educational standards, teacher accountability, and school improvement.

These changes have put immense stress on SEAs. The performance review study found that DEED is more focused on compliance than its peer agencies due to its large number of federally funded positions (relative to the size of the department). Additionally, DEED is focused on state-mandated programs initiated by the Alaska State Legislature. As one leader of DEED articulated, *We would like to be more service-oriented, but frankly if the program or initiative is not mandated, we know that [the] Legislature will not fund it.* DEED's role has become primarily one of administering state and federal funds; the agency has been compelled to focus on compliance with the law and mandates rather than on how to best help districts and schools increase student achievement.

While vital to DEED, federal funding is dispersed to the agency with restrictions. It is strictly tied to specific programs and employees, and the commissioner has little control over how the funds are allocated. As a result, offices within DEED are in many cases "siloes" with little to no interaction between federal- and state-salaried employees. The review team encourages the new commissioner of education to carefully review these findings when considering how best to reorganize the agency. Agencies organized around funding streams rather than function struggle with coherence and effectiveness.[3] The study found that while districts appreciate the flexibility of local control, they (particularly the rural districts) are requesting more technical assistance, training, and guidance from DEED, not only in improving student achievement, but also in addressing operational challenges.

The review team found that DEED faces challenges working with some local leadership when confronted with persistently low-performing schools. If changes in the state's system of support (see **Recommendation 3.5.1**) do not result in significant improvement in student achievement and graduation rates in low-performing schools, the Alaska State Legislature should consider granting DEED

[3] http://www.bscpcenter.org/resources/publications/Solutions_Issue_4_Functional_Coherence_in_SEA.pdf

the authority to take over failing schools and districts (now allowed under federal law). The threat of state takeover is a powerful lever to incite change at the local level, and can empower local superintendents and school boards that are pushing for reform. If there is to be significant improvement in student outcomes in poor-performing districts/schools, it will be imperative that the State Board and the Alaska State Legislature support and fund these efforts.

As illustrated in **Appendix B**, Alaska has higher than average total revenue, per pupil spending, and higher teacher salaries in comparison with selected peer states, but disappointingly, has lower test scores and graduation rates. This discrepancy underlines the need for state support in struggling schools.

Significant gaps in achievement exist among subgroups of Alaskan students, evidenced in state assessment scores and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Alaska's two largest racial/ethnic groups are white students (about 50 percent) and American Indian/Alaska Native students (about 25 percent). There are achievement level gaps between white students and all other racial/ethnic groups, but the largest gaps are between white students and American Indian/Alaska Native students. American Indian/Alaska Native students consistently trail other subgroups on NAEP (see **Recommendation 3.5.1** for more information on the state's system of support for low performing schools.) Alaska Native boys perform the lowest in the country on NAEP. The plight of these students is evident in the subgroup analysis of scores. The Public Works review team acknowledges that taking over a school or district is a complex undertaking, and DEED must carefully build and assess its capacity to do so successfully before considering such action.

In summary, the review team finds DEED to be only partially successful in achieving its mission through effectively and efficiently delivering its core services, goals, programs, and objectives. Much remains to be accomplished, including the completion of a focused strategic plan for DEED, and a re-thinking of DEED's methods of delivering services to school districts. DEED's success, however, is also dependent on the legislature's support for a data-driven approach to improving the educational opportunities for all Alaska public school students. The recommendations of the Public Works review team are intended to assist the state in carrying out its constitutional mission to ensure quality standards-based instruction to improve academic achievement for all students.

1.1 GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Findings

The current governance structure of the Alaska State Board of Education (State Board) does not adequately delineate the roles of the State Board, the Governor, the commissioner of education, and the Legislature with respect to leadership, oversight, and authority over the state's K-12 education policies and activities.

The Governor of Alaska appoints all of the voting members of the State Board of Education with the legislature's confirmation. Of the nine total members, there are seven voting members appointed by the governor for five-year, overlapping terms, subject to confirmation by a majority of the members of the Legislature in joint session. A student advisor and a military advisor also serve as non-voting members. There are no ex-officio members. The commissioner of DEED is appointed by the State Board of Education, with approval by the Governor of Alaska. Alaska is the only state where the commissioner of education is so appointed. In other words, the Governor and /or the State Board ultimately has the ability to hire and/or terminate the commissioner of education.

According to a report by the Education Commission of the States:[4]

- Chief state school officers are appointed in 38 states (75 percent) with state boards appointing in 23 states (61 percent) and the governor appointing in 15 states (39 percent). The chief state school officer is elected in 13 states (25 percent).[5]

- Of the 47 states with a state board of education, members of the board are appointed in 33 states (70 percent); they are elected in seven states (15 percent); and in seven other states (15 percent) boards consist of a mix of appointed and elected members. Note: Four states have no state board of education; two of these (including Washington, DC) have an elected advisory committee instead of a state board.

[4] Education Commission of the States (ECS), K-12 Governance Structures, 2013.
[5] The total number of states in this calculation is equal to 51 because Washington, DC is included.

- In 24 states (48 percent), the governor appoints all of the voting members of the state board.

- In 15 states (30 percent), the governor appoints some, but not all, of the state board of education members.

- In nine of those 15 states, the governor appoints 75-89 percent of the state board of education members. In the other six, the governor appoints from 5-57 percent of the state board members.

- In 11 states (22 percent), the governor does not appoint any of the voting members of the state board.

- In five states (10 percent), including Washington, DC, there is an executive-level secretary of education, in addition to the chief state school officer. Forty-six states (90 percent) do not have such a position.

In January 2016, the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) published a state education governance matrix for all states.[6] As previously noted, Alaska is the only state in which the commissioner of education is appointed by the State Board of Education with the approval of the governor. The matrix is available at: www.nasbe.org/wp-content/uploads/Governance-matrix-January-2016.pdf.

Interview responses from DEED staff, State Board members, and district staff indicate that the current structure is dysfunctional. Interviewees were asked to: *Describe the governance structure involving the SBE, Governor's office, the legislature, and the commissioner of education. In your estimation, who is in charge of K-12 education in Alaska and has this been clarified for all parties involved?*

Interviewees (who included a former Alaska State commissioner of education) indicated the system is confusing even to individuals tasked with essential state education functions, and expressed contradictory and varied beliefs about whether the position of commissioner of education must ultimately be

[6] www.nasbe.org/wp-content/uploads/Governance-matrix-January-2016.pdf

accountable to the governor, the State Board, or both. Responses included, but were not limited to, the following:

- *I am not sure who is in charge*. (multiple interviewees' response)
- *If DEED thinks there is an issue with a statute or regulation, instead of saying 'no' or thinking of ways it will not work, [it should] work with the Legislature to see if a workable solution can be found.*
- *These are confusing times. Unlike other commissioner-level appointments, the commissioner of education is not subjected to legislative approval.*
- *We have had legislative legal counsel review all of this. The governor cannot hire or fire the commissioner…the State Board hires and fires.*
- *The commissioner does not work for the governor; he works for the State Board.*
- *The State Board is trying to figure out our goals; there is a lack of role clarification.*
- *It's an interesting balancing act as to whether the commissioner reports to the board or the governor.*
- *We've had strong conversations on who is the captain of the ship. The real control lies in the commissioner's hands.*

On February 4, 2016, the governor announced a change in the Department of Education leadership effective March 1, 2016, with the Director of the Division of Teaching and Learning to serve as the interim commissioner. The press release, distributed from the Governor's office indicated that the Board and Governor made a decision to have the state's education system led in a new direction. The release expressed appreciation for the Commissioner's Hanley's cooperation with the transition and indicated that the governor would work closely with the Board of Education to secure new leadership for the department.

An *Alaska Dispatch* article, dated February 8, 2016, reported that the State Board of Education never voted to remove the commissioner.[7] The article reported conflicting statements by the governor and a State Board member, raising questions as to the process by which commissioners are replaced or removed.

The current governance structure results in confusion both as to who ultimately makes the decision to hire and terminate the commissioner, and to who holds authority for making decisions affecting K-12 education if the governor and State Board are not in agreement.

As noted above, Alaska is the only state where the State Board and the Governor both have the ability to hire and fire the state's commissioner of education. Other states typically do not employ this structure because it can lead to organizational dysfunction if the board and the governor (or other controlling entity) disagree on matters of substance. This situation can lead to confusion regarding what actions can or should be taken as administrative decisions are made. Furthermore, the education commissioner is placed in a position of having to answer to two authorities that may oppose each other, thus creating more organizational confusion.

An orderly, clearly established line of authority will minimize the potential for confusion and assist the State Board in holding the chief accountable. Additionally, too many levels of hierarchy can result in excessively slow decision-making and are a barrier to empowerment. Commissioners may play the State Board against the governor or try to placate one or the other if both do not agree on a particular issue. Also, by having both entities with equal decision-making power, policies may not be consistently applied and power plays among the three entities (State Board, governor of Alaska, and/or the commissioner of education) may exist and the resulting dysfunction hampers their effectiveness. Interviews with educational leaders in Alaska indicated that at times, these issues impact Alaska's educational governance.

DEED, the State Board of Education, and the governor should commit to learning more about the various governance structures used by other states and work

[7] http://www.adn.com/article/20160208/education-commissioners-firing-followed-refusal-spend-religious-school

with the legislature to take action on changing the current structure as required in AS 14.07.085.

Recommendation 1.1.1

Alter the current governance structure of DEED to ensure role clarity and establish a clear reporting structure for the commissioner of education position. (Tier 1)

According to the Education Commission of the States (ECS), there are four key models of governance used by the majority of states:[8]

- **Model One –** In this model, the governor appoints the majority or all of the members of the State Board of Education. The State Board, in turn, appoints the chief state school officer. Model One includes 14 states: Alaska[9], Arkansas, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi,[10] Missouri, Oregon,[11] Rhode Island,[12] and West Virginia.

- **Model Two –** In this model, a majority or all of the members of the State Board of Education are elected, and the State Board appoints the chief state school officer. Seven states fall into Model Two: Alabama, Colorado, Kansas, Louisiana, Michigan, Nebraska, and Utah.

- **Model Three –** In this model, the Governor appoints the majority or all of the members of the State Board of Education. The chief state school officer is elected. Model Three includes nine states: Arizona, California, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Montana, North Carolina, North Dakota, and Oklahoma. In five of these states—Arizona, Idaho, Indiana, North Dakota,

[8] http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/01/08/70/10870.pdf
[9] In the State of Alaska, both the State Board of Education and the Governor can appoint and/or terminate the chief education officer.
[10] In Mississippi, the Governor appoints five of the nine voting members; the four remaining voting members are appointed evenly by the lieutenant governor and the Speaker of the House.
[11] The governor appoints 12 of the 13 voting members of the Oregon Education Investment Board (OEIB) and seven of the nine voting members of the Oregon State Board of Education. The OEIB appoints the chief education officer.
[12] Rhode Island has 11 voting members of the State Board of Education, which is a K-20 board. All 11 members are appointed by the governor.

and Oklahoma[13]—the chief state school officer also is a voting member of the State Board of Education.

- **Model Four –** In this model, the Governor appoints the majority or all of the State Board of Education members and the chief state school officer. There are 11 Model Four states: Delaware, Iowa, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, and Wyoming.

The remaining nine states not identified above, plus the District of Columbia, function under modified versions of the above four models. The nine states include: Minnesota, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, South Carolina, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin.

Each state has its own unique set of circumstances and thus there is no one model that fits all states. The most successful governance model depends on the political philosophy and educational priorities of the state. According to *State Education Governance Structures*, a report published by the Education Commission of the States (ECS), if the prevailing value in a state is to shield from partisan politics the process of state-level decision-making about K-12 education, a strong policy-making State Board that appoints the chief state school officer may be the best course of action. This approach can allow the State Board to "focus on long-range vision for schools and it might make education reform less vulnerable to political pressures of election cycles that often result in "quick fix" strategies."[14] Such strategies may be popular among groups with political clout, whether or not they are supported by peer-reviewed research or empirical, outcome-based evidence.

States using this model (under which the State Board is solely responsible for appointing the Chief State School Officer) have reported that it also assists them in holding the Chief accountable, the role is perceived as less partisan, and the commissioner of education may be more likely to be an educator than a politician.

---

[13] The Oklahoma State Board of Education oversees the state system of education, but not the state education agency.
[14] http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/92/33/9233.pdf

Since the existing governance structure is prescribed in statute, legislative action must be taken to implement this recommendation.

1.2 ROLE CLARIFICATION OF THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION, BOARD TRAINING, AND BOARD SELF-ASSESSMENT

Findings

The duties of the State Board of Education are not clearly defined, the Board lacks sufficient training, and there is no system in place for the Board to conduct a self-evaluation to determine its effectiveness.

A review of the Board's bylaws shows that the duties of the chair, vice-chair, and advisory members are clearly defined, but the document does not outline the key responsibilities of the board overall.

The State Board has several new members and interviews indicate the board has a lack of overall consensus on its responsibilities.

The National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) Task Force on State Board Leadership states, *No matter what a state's governing structure, it must ensure the independence of its state board. Beyond that, the key to success lies in a board's skill in carrying out its mandate and working cooperatively with other decision makers.*[15]

State boards should serve as unbiased brokers of education decision-making. Boards should seek the big picture, articulating the long-term vision and mission of the state, and making policy based on the best interests of students, educators, and the public. Interviews conducted by the review team indicate a lack of role clarity among board members, the commissioner, the governor, and the legislature. Selected comments included:

- *I am not sure who is in charge*. (Multiple interviewees' response).

[15] National Association of State Boards of Education, http://www.nasbe.org/wp content/uploads/NASBE-New-SBE-Member-Packet2015.pdf, 2015.

- *Eighty percent of the time, DEED is fighting the legislature over the implementation of law that the legislature has put into place. The bill is created and run through committees, the bill goes to the floor, goes through a vetting process, and signed by the Governor. Then, the battle begins…regulations are then written by DEED staff who believe it is a poorly constructed law and try to fix it.*

- *If DEED thinks there is an issue with a statute or regulation, instead of saying no or thinking of ways it will not work, work with the legislature to see if a workable solution can be found.*

- *The three entities simply don't play well together.*

- *This SBE is more empowered than the last board; it makes it awkward at times especially since few SBE members have a K-12 background.*

- *These are confusing times. Unlike other commissioner level appointments, the commissioner of education is not subjected to legislative approval.*

- *We have had legislative legal counsel review all of this. The governor cannot hire or fire the commissioner…the State Board hires and fires.*

- *The commissioner does not work for the governor; he works for the State Board.*

- *The State Board is trying to figure out our goals; there is a lack of role clarification.*

- *It is hard for the State Board to determine if they are doing their job well because they don't know what their job is.*

- *It's an interesting balancing act as to whether the commission reports to the board or the governor.*

- *We've had strong conversations on who is the captain of the ship. The real control lies in the commissioner's hands.*

- *Commissioner Hanley is experienced and knows what is best for K-12; legislators and the State* Board need to trust his knowledge and experience.

Interviews and a review of news articles indicate there is even a lack of clarity on who ultimately has the authority to hire and/or fire the commissioner – the board or the governor.

As shown in **Exhibit 1-1** on the following page, Massachusetts state law sets forth specific requirements for the selection of its state board members. To ensure some members have a broad educational background, appointed board members have a minimum of one representative from a labor organization, one representative from the business industry with a demonstrated commitment to education, one representative of parents of school children (in the public school system), as well as a student representative. The Massachusetts Parent Teacher Association provides the parent nominees. The NASBE also works with the National Governors' Association (NGA) to produce a tool for governors to utilize in narrowing their choice of appointed members that NASBE can provide as a resource to its member states.

EXHIBIT 1-1
MASSACHUSETTS STATE LAW SECTION 1 E
BOARD COMPOSITION AND REQUIREMENTS

Section 1E. There shall be in the department a board of elementary and secondary education, in this chapter called the board, which shall consist of the chairman of the student advisory council established under this section, the secretary of education, in this chapter called the secretary, or her designee, and 9 members appointed by the governor. The 9 members appointed by the governor shall consist of 1 representative of a labor organization selected by the governor from a list of 3 nominees provided by the Massachusetts State Labor Council, AFL-CIO; 1 representative of business or industry selected by the governor with a demonstrated commitment to education; 1 representative of parents of school children selected by the governor from a list of 3 nominees provided by the Massachusetts Parent Teachers Association; and 6 additional members. No appointive member of said board shall be employed by or receive regular compensation from the department of education, or from any school system, public or independent, in the commonwealth, or serve as a member of any school committee. Not more than two members of said board shall be employed on a full-time basis by any agency of the commonwealth. Of the 9 members appointed by the governor, 1 shall be appointed for a term that is coterminous with that of the governor. Each of the remaining 8 members shall be appointed for a term of 5 years. Vacancies shall be filled consistent with the requirements of section 10 of chapter 30. No person shall be appointed to serve more than two full terms, provided, however, that only service on or after July 1, 1996 shall be counted for this purpose. Prior service on said board for a term of less than three years, resulting from an initial appointment or an appointment for the remainder of an unexpired term, shall not be counted as a full term. If a member is absent from any four regularly scheduled monthly meetings, exclusive of July and August, in any calendar year, his office as a member of said board shall be deemed vacant. The chairman of the board shall forthwith notify the governor that such vacancy exists. A person affiliated with an independent institution of higher education shall be eligible for membership on said board. No member of said board shall be found to be in violation of section six of chapter two hundred and sixty-eight A for conduct which involves his participation, as a member of said board, in a particular matter before said board which may affect the financial interest of an independent institution of higher education with which he is affiliated; provided, however, that said member, his immediate family or partner has no personal and direct financial interest in said particular matter; and provided, further, that such affiliation is disclosed to said board and recorded in the minutes of the board.

The members of the board shall be reimbursed for their necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties.

The chairperson of the board shall be appointed by the governor. Members of the board who are employed on a full-time basis by the commonwealth shall be ineligible to serve as chairperson.

The board shall meet not fewer than ten times annually at the call of the chairman.

1.1 There is hereby established a student advisory council to the board of education, consisting of four elected representatives from each student regional council

established under the provisions of this section, one of whom shall be a student in a vocational secondary school. The members of said student advisory council shall by majority vote prior to the first day of June in each year elect from their number a chairman who shall serve for a term of one year.

Source: Massachusetts State Law, Section 1 E., 2016.

Recommendation 1.2.1

Clearly define the State Board of Education's role and ensure the role is communicated to all stakeholders and allow the clearly defined role to drive board decisions. (Tier 1)

While the scope of State Boards' responsibilities is defined differently in every state, there are common responsibilities as outlined in best practices. For example:

- Setting statewide curriculum standards, including approval of any cross-state common standards;
- Establishing high school graduation requirements;
- Determining qualifications for professional education personnel;
- Establishing state accountability testing and assessment programs;
- Establishing standards for accreditation of local school districts and preparation programs for teachers and administrators;
- Implementing federal requirements or acts (where appropriate for the state);
- Applying for and administering federal assistance programs; and
- Developing rules and regulations for the administration of state programs.

According to NASBE, the key roles of state boards include:

- **Policymaker:** The state board is responsible for policies that promote educational quality throughout the state. In this capacity, the board defines the fundamental mission of the state's education system and develops the system's long-range goals. In order to meet these goals, the board enacts appropriate regulations, lobbies for necessary legislation, develops an adequate education budget, supports local implementation efforts, oversees the state department of education, and regularly measures the performance of the system.

- **Advocate for Education:** The state board serves as the primary advocate for a quality education for all children and youth in the state. As such, the

board seeks to promote excellence in the education of all students and advocates equality of access to educational opportunity.

- **Liaison:** The state board serves as a bridge between educators and others involved in education policy. It translates the concerns of the general public, elected officials, business leaders and civic groups into policy and clearly communicates them to educators. At the same time, the board articulates the needs of the education system to the state's public and private constituencies and helps assure continued citizen support for education at a time when fewer adults have children in school.

- **Consensus Builder:** The state board encourages communication and consensus among all those who seek to influence current state education policies and help formulate long-range policy goals and plans. Although consensus may not always be possible, a commitment to consensus building ensures that all citizens will be heard. State boards ensure that the public voice is represented in decisions about public education.

In addition to the responsibilities outlined above, outstanding state boards also maintain links with member school districts to ensure that local districts are aware of, and if necessary can act upon, issues that might affect the local school districts. Also, to stay apprised of best practices, state board members should consider participating in select state and national functions. Members must make a commitment to attend all board meetings and prepare in advance for the discussions.

The fiscal impact of this recommendation cannot readily be determined; however, implementation will require board member time and board staff resources.

Recommendation 1.2.2

Increase the level of State Board of Education members' training and professional development. (Tier 1)

Other than a brief two-hour orientation for new State Board members and some training on ethics, there has been minimal board member training, according to a review of documents and interviews.

To assist the State Board in keeping abreast of DEED's initiatives, a DEED representative should be included on each board meeting's agenda to provide regular written and oral division updates to ensure board members are kept abreast of activities, strengths, and challenges of each of DEED's divisions.

Many of the State Board members are new to their positions. Some members have limited background or experience in K-12 education. Board members and DEED staff interviews indicate that the board could benefit from additional training. Requests for additional training included the following topics:

- How DEED is organized, particularly what all the positions in the Division of Teaching and Learning are responsible for handling;
- Overview of rules, state regulations;
- How Board members should handle public comments that they receive outside of the public comment process; and
- What is allowed and not allowed with regard to the Open Meetings Act.

The fiscal impact of this recommendation is dependent on the types and costs of selected training, ranging from use of DEED staff resources to professional courses.

Recommendation 1.2.3

Consider becoming a member of the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE). (Tier 1)

Alaska is one of only 14 states that is not a member of NASBE. NASBE is the only national organization dedicated to providing professional development for members of state boards of education. While the cost to become a member is approximately $14,000 for the first year and approximately $19,000 for subsequent years, there is a strong return on investment.

- NASBE offers member states the opportunity to seek stipends that will further their work in various areas such as standards adoption and implementation.

- NASBE represents its membership on federal education matters before the administration, Congress, and the US Department of Education. Member states are entitled to name one individual to serve on the Government

Affairs Committee, which coordinates this work. They will also assist state boards of education that are seeking a new chief state school officer.

- State board members will have access to:
    - Webinars on topics of high interest to state board of education members.
    - Special interest meetings that bring together state board members and national policy experts to examine key policy issues affecting state boards of education.
- Members turn to NASBE for accurate and research-based information about the latest issues in education.
- NASBE offers member boards free technical assistance in a variety of areas. Some examples include:
    - State Board Strategic Planning
    - Boardsmanship
    - Board Self-Evaluation
    - Working with the Legislature
    - Handling Negative Press
    - Data Privacy

There are many testimonials as to the benefits of NASBE. For example:

> *We don't know what we don't know. In joining NASBE, I discovered what it meant 'individually' to be a responsible, accountable member of a state board of education and how 'collectively' we can be a more effective, efficient board in our state. I had the opportunity to network with knowledgeable individuals from all over the country on common issues and have built lasting friendships.* –Gayle Manchin, past president, West Virginia Board of Education.

The State Board should consider attending NASBE's New State Board Member Institute. NASBE helps support these new members by covering the costs of two members from each state. Held every summer in Arlington, Virginia, the Institute is designed to equip new board members with skills, knowledge, and insider tips that will enable them to be more effective board members. Additionally, NASBE hosts regular webinars on various topics that state policymakers need to know.

The fiscal impact of this recommendation $14,000 for the first year and $19,000 for each subsequent year, in addition to travel costs associated with attending the NASBE New State Board Member Institute. While it is understood that the use of funds to pursue national membership may be difficult to justify in the current fiscal climate, based on other states' positive outcomes, the review team believes that the short term investment will lead to a more effective and efficient operation of DEED. The review team recommends this investment in order to help DEED keep abreast of national best practices, and to provide DEED the benefit of learning what initiatives have worked or not worked in other states, and why.

Recommendation 1.2.4

Conduct annual State Board self-evaluations. (Tier 1)

Interviews indicate the State Board is not conducting evaluations to take the pulse on how well members believe they are performing as a Board. To ascertain their effectiveness, state boards should periodically conduct self-evaluations.

One reason for conducting such evaluations is to ensure that the board is working within the broad constraints of its mission statement. If not, the chair should redirect the board.

Such an evaluation should be done prior to evaluating the commissioner of education in order to ensure the board is carrying out its responsibilities. If the board is not doing so with "one voice," the work of the commissioner of education will be much more difficult. Best practices from multiple states indicate that a board self-assessment should answer questions such as:

- Does the board place the needs of the membership before personal or political gain?
- Does the board demonstrate a sincere and unselfish interest in public education?
- Does the conduct of the board promote a positive image of the association?
- Does the board make decisions based on what is good for members of the association as a whole?

- Does the board work to ensure that available resources are allocated on the basis of board priorities?

- Does the board require training in particular subjects?

- Does the board maintain visibility among key stakeholders?

- Does the board conduct meetings in a businesslike manner, following accepted parliamentary procedure?

- At its meetings, does the board consider both information and action items and allow sufficient time for discussion?

- Does the board ensure that the amount of time spent on each agenda item is appropriate in terms of the item's importance?

- Does the board provide the commissioner of education a clear statement of its expectations for his or her performance and use those expectations in an evaluation?

- Does the board work with the commissioner of education to achieve a climate of good faith and good will through teamwork and clear communication?

- Does the board ensure it has adequately researched a topic for best practices prior to making decisions?

- Does the board use technology to enhance its operations? (electronic board packets, minutes, teleconferencing, etc.)

The fiscal impact of this recommendation cannot be readily determined, but will require board member and board staff resources.

1.3 DEED STRATEGIC PLAN

Findings

DEED and the State Board of Education have recently begun a new strategic planning process. While the process is off to a positive start, much work needs to

be accomplished to ensure the new strategic plan meets best practices standards and results in an improvement over the current plan.

A review of the current State Board of Education strategic plan and interviews with key DEED staff, Board members, legislators, key partners, and school district staff confirm that the plan and the measurement of progress contained in the plan do not meet industry best practices standards.

The current plan, titled *The Alaska Education Plan*, was developed in 2008 and adopted by the State Board in March 2009. The plan lacks components of a best practice accountability plan, i.e., specificity, measureable goals, highly visible and well communicated, and there was little expectation that the district's strategic plans were in alignment with the state's plan.

The plan's vision statement was:

> An Alaska education opens a world of possibilities:
>
> - Our parents and students value and support learning;
> - Our communities support dreams and create opportunities;
> - Our schools inspire thinking and creativity; and
> - Our graduates understand the past.

It was noted by the review team that the State Board's bylaws document posted on DEED's website has a different vision statement with a 2003 adoption date.

The previous mission statement was to "ensure quality standards-based instruction to improve academic achievement for all students." Alaska Constitution Article 7, Sec. 1; AS 14.17.

As of February 8, 2016, The State Board has not changed the vision and mission statements on the public website. The previous plan's last dated strategic plan progress report can be viewed at: https://education.alaska.gov/edsummit/pdf/alaska_education_plan.pdf.

Specific data and measures to show the plan's progress are not included in the update. When asked in interviews about how the plan's progress was measured,

a plethora of varied responses indicated there was no uniformity in the way progress was being measured.

State Board interviewees indicated their desire to improve upon the existing strategic plan to ensure the new plan is more specific, measureable, and includes a DEED accountability component.

Feedback from interviews demonstrates that the existing plan lacked specificity, was not data-driven, lacked progress reports with specific data indicating progress on the plan, and was poorly communicated to stakeholders. When district staff were asked if their local plans were in alignment with the state's plan, a plethora of responses indicated that there is little, if any, alignment or any expectations from the state that their plan is in alignment with the state plan.

Further, various department staff indicated their unfamiliarity with the current plan and most divisions within DEED do not have a division plan that aligns to the state plan. Some stated they use their performance measures as their plan (see findings and recommendations related to results/performance measures in Objective 2 of this report). Many DEED staff were unfamiliar with DEED's overall strategic plan, its mission or vision. One administrator stated that DEED's mission is *we do what we do for the benefit of children*.

The current strategic plan (according to interviews and a review of documentation) was written in isolation with very little division input. While district-level leaders were surveyed, it was reported that they had little input into the actual strategic plan.

Public Works conducted a survey of DEED and district leadership and several open-ended comments confirmed the need for a more robust state-level strategic plan. Survey comments included, but were not limited to:

- *We enjoy working with the individuals at DEED and they appear to try their best; however, they are very focused on compliance, which is only part of their core mission. (Superintendent.)*

- *Alaska was on a clear path and now we are lost.*

- *Honestly, this is the first time that I have heard of their mission. I wish they would put more emphasis on this to provide clear direction and reduce knee jerk reactions and constant change in direction. On their behalf, I know that they are hindered with the actions of our lawmakers and the Feds.*

- *I have never seen or heard of our mission statement nor has my director ever referred to one.*

- *DEED is understaffed to do the job requested. What they do, they do well. Communication of the vision is the only lacking detail.*

- *I believe most of us just do our narrow job and don't recognize the part we play in the overall scheme of things.*

- *In the department I work in, there is not a long-range plan or a measurement of effective delivery. I cannot speak for other departments.*

- *DEED offers guidance from a national perspective and answers questions, but often relies on the district to figure out details and direction. The district is not aware of a long-range strategic plan to guide the decision-making process or of any results-based measures that impact efficiency or effectiveness.*

DEED's two stated missions were presented on the survey of DEED staff and district superintendents, and respondents were asked to give their opinion as to whether DEED achieves each mission. **Exhibit 1-2** below shows a summary of the results of the survey.

- Approximately 30 percent of respondents in both groups choose "neither agree nor disagree" for both mission objectives, when asked whether DEED achieved each one. However, DEED staff feels it is being more successful in meeting its mission than do superintendents: 64 percent of DEED staff agreed DEED is meeting both of its mission objectives, whereas only 42 percent of superintendents agreed.

- Several respondents noted that DEED has a very dedicated staff and does a lot with limited resources—although some noted it could not meet its mission because of limited resources.

- Several respondents noted that DEED does not really improve instruction because it provides very little instructional support and has little input into instruction, but rather helps with accountability and compliance.

- There were several respondents from the Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums (LAM) who noted directly or indirectly that the mission does not include LAM's functions.

EXHIBIT 1-2
DEED SURVEY RESULTS

Questions & Response Options		DEED Staff	Superintendents
DEED achieves its mission of ensuring quality standards-based instruction through its core services, goals, programs, and objectives.			
	Agree or Strongly Agree	**64%**	**42%**
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	**30%**	**31%**
	Disagree or Strongly Disagree	**5%**	**27%**
DEED achieves its mission of improving academic achievement for all students through its core services, goals, programs, and objectives.			
	Agree or Strongly Agree	**64%**	**42%**
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	**28%**	**31%**
	Disagree or Strongly Disagree	**7%**	**27%**

Source: Public Works Survey, 2016.

An outside firm was hired by the State Board to assist in gathering stakeholder feedback and to help with the development of the new strategic plan. The outside firm produced stakeholder engagement findings in September 2015 after surveying superintendents (56.6% response rate), legislators (18.3% response rate), and board members (75 with an unknown response rate). The responses from the survey served as a basis for the development of the new strategic plan. The outside firm's survey questions focused on protecting local control, modernizing the system, and providing teacher quality, recruitment, and retention.

The State Board decided to end its contract with the outside firm and continue developing the new strategic plan internally with the assistance of key DEED

staff. The Board and key staff conducted a daylong work session in Sitka to continue work on the framework of a new strategic plan and met again in December 2015 to continue its work on the framework. The Board set up subcommittees for each of the new goals and to ensure that they, as one Board member stated, *put the meat on the goals*. The schedule is for the new plan to be completed and voted upon in the fall of 2016.

Exhibit 1-3 below illustrates the outline of the new framework as of December 2015. As shown, the framework for the new plan has three key strategic priorities.

EXHIBIT 1-3
ALASKA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT
STRATEGIC PLAN PROGRESS AS OF DECEMBER 2015

CURRENT STATE

In partnership with the Department of Education & Early Development and with support from Governor Walker and state statute, the Alaska State Board of Education will play a vital role in helping set strategic direction for improving statewide student achievement. This strategic shift will tighten alignment between the Board and the Department and improve collaboration and execution of strategic objectives.

MISSION

To ensure quality standards-based instruction to improve academic achievement for all students. (Adopted September 2003 per Bylaws of the State Board of Education & Early Development)

VISION

The State Board of Education & Early Development is committed to develop, maintain and continuously improve a comprehensive, quality public education system. (Adopted September 2003 per Bylaws of the State Board of Education & Early Development)

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES OVERVIEW

1. Empower local control of educational decisions.
2. Modernize the state's educational system.
3. Ensure high-quality educators for Alaska's children.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development will:

1. Provide leadership that supports high expectations for Alaska's students and

educational system.

2. Support ideas and initiatives that are actionable.

3. Establish trust and credibility among every stakeholder and partner involved in the process of improving student achievement.

4. Be honest and transparent.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES - Detail

Priority #1: Empower local control of educational decisions.

Alaska maintains a strong commitment to local governance of public schools. The Department of Education & Early Development strives to support districts and to facilitate improvement without unnecessary or intrusive mandates to local governance, while recognizing its responsibility to monitor compliance with state and federal law.

1.1 Facilitate strong partnerships with and among school districts, educational organizations, and other education stakeholders in pursuit of educational excellence.

1.2 Improve the process for input and feedback regarding State Board decisions.

1.3 Scrutinize existing state mandates to eliminate unnecessary and/or unfunded mandates when possible and be able to fully justify any additional mandates imposed on school districts.

Priority #2: Modernize the state's educational system.

Young people learn best when the school system adapts to each student instead of the student adapting to the system. Expanding beyond one-size-fits-all education to multiple options and increased flexibility can personalize education to meet individual needs and better prepare students for the workplace or post-secondary education. Innovative approaches to education, including effective use of technology, may accelerate learning while cutting costs and expanding opportunity.

2.1 Increase and incentivize options and flexibility to personalize the educational experience for students.

2.2 Promote innovative use of technology in order to increase access to high-quality coursework, improve efficiency, and amplify learning.

2.3 Encourage and support innovative approaches to expand opportunity to overcome Alaska's educational challenges.

Priority #3: Ensure high-quality educators for Alaska's children.

Teachers and school leaders are two of the most important in-school contributors to student achievement. Every student deserves to be taught by skillful, effective teachers

and every teacher deserves the support of skillful, dedicated administrators. The recruitment, retention, and continuous improvement of teachers and administrators are an ongoing challenge for Alaska's public schools. The State Board of Education & Early Development is committed to partnership and leadership toward ensuring high-quality educators for Alaska's students.

3.1 Develop state policy strategies for improving recruitment of high quality teachers and administrators.

3.2 Advocate for mentoring/coaching programs to support early-career teachers and administrators.

3.3 Partner with the University of Alaska to improve teacher preparation, recruitment, and retention.

3.4 Identify partnering opportunities to support ongoing, high-quality professional learning for teachers and administrators.

Source: Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development, 2015 and DEED's website, 2016.

Subsequent to Public Works' onsite work, the Board has continued to refine the new strategic plan. In a document that provides action steps for Priority 3 (Ensure high quality educators for Alaska's children), the State Board states that it is asking *the Legislature to refrain from making drastic funding cuts in FY 2017 budget so that the Board can flesh out its new Strategic Plan.* The plan is scheduled to be completed in the fall of 2016.

Commendation 1.A

The State Board and DEED are commended for their work to initiate a robust, visible, and exemplary strategic plan.

Recommendation 1.3.1

Ensure the new DEED strategic plan is data-driven, with specific, measureable, attainable, realistic, timely (SMART) goals and ensure the plan is well communicated to stakeholders, tied to a specific budget, monitored regularly, and reported to the State Board and public on a regular basis. (Tier 1)

(See also Objective 8 for additional recommendations related to the State's technology strategic plan.)

By implementing this recommendation, the State Board and DEED should have a focused path to achieve its mission, *Alaska's students have the skills and knowledge to contribute to local, state, national and global communities by understanding the past and present, and they are prepared to create the future.*

DEED should encourage districts to align their local plans with the state plan allowing for local flexibility, thereby ensuring the state and districts are in concert with the State Board's mission, vision, goals, and strategies in the new strategic plan.

The key components of a best practices strategic plan include, but are not limited to:

- Involving a wide range of stakeholders;
- Data-driven;
- Grounded in research on best practices;
- Specific, measureable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound goals;
- Specific funding attached to implementing the goals;
- Well vetted (peer-reviewed); and
- Clearly communicated.

Many state departments of education are turning to the Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence in developing their strategic plan. The Baldridge Criteria provides a holistic assessment of where the organization is and where it needs to be. Part of it includes the development of a strategic plan that will define the organization's vision, mission, and values set by the leadership, a SWOT analysis of the internal and external environment, goals and objectives, action plans (the who, what, when, and how to achieve those objectives), metrics (performance measures), and a strategic management system (data analysis and performance improvement opportunities).

There are numerous best practices for developing a strategic plan provided by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). The State Board should ensure the development of the plan uses researched and practitioner-based processes.

The National Association of State Boards of Education has many tools to assist state boards in its strategic planning efforts. For an example, see:

http://www.nasbe.org/wpcontent/uploads/Boards_Role_Implementing_Strat_Plan_07.06.pdf.

Other best practice resources to consult to ensure a strong strategic planning process includes the United States Department of Education (USDOE) What Works Clearinghouse at: http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/.

The State Board should consider establishing a committee to review other high performing states' strategic plans as they continue to develop the Alaska plan. For example, Kentucky's state plan is based on the principles of Baldridge concepts. The Kentucky plan and related links can be found at: http://education.ky.gov/districts/tech/kmp/Pages/Strategic-Plan.aspx.

Mississippi is another state with a strong strategic plan. Their plan does an excellent job of aligning board processes and agency organization and resources to their plan. The plan is available at: http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/TD/news/2014/12/18/mississippi-board-of-education-unveils-5-year-strategic-plan.

North Carolina has included a digital learning plan within their strategic plan. The goal of this plan is to build upon existing foundations to develop a long-term strategy that sets priorities, supports innovation, and provides resources to enable the state's educators and students to fully benefit from digital age teaching and learning. Since one of the Board's new goals involves modernizing education, the State Board may want to consider a similar plan for Alaska. The North Carolina plan can be found at: http://dlplan.fincsu.wpengine.com/wpcontent/uploads/sites/11/2015/09/NC-Digital-Learning-Detailed-Plan-9-14-15.pdf.

DEED asked the review team to provide data that supports corresponding positive outcomes in the states (such as Kentucky and Mississippi) where strong strategic plans are in place. *The Daily Journal* (major daily from northern Mississippi) stated, *Compared to 2013 scores, Mississippi was the only state that had a significant increase in fourth grade math and was one of 13 states that had a significant increase in fourth grade reading. Most states' fourth grade reading scores remained flat.*[16]

[16] http://djournal.com/news/mississippi-fourth-graders-lead-nation-in-2015-naep-gains

Comments from National Center for Education Statistics Commissioner, Peggy Carr, stated on the release date for 2015 NAEP, *Grade 4 mathematics scores increased for several states and jurisdictions— these were the Department of Defense Education Activity, the District of Columbia, and Mississippi. Sixteen states had declines in average scores and there were no significant changes in scores from 2013 to 2015 in 33 states.*

Further evidence of corresponding positive outcomes include Kentucky's recent selected accomplishments:

- In *Education Week's* annual "Quality Counts" report of key education indicators, Kentucky ranked 10th in 2013, moving up from 34th place in 2010.

- A Harvard study ranked Kentucky eighth in student performance improvement in the last two decades.

- The 2015 "Building a Grad Nation" report, called Kentucky "a beacon to all other states" for its ability to all but eliminate the opportunity gap between low-income students and all other students to graduate on time. There is only a 1.4 percent difference, the lowest in the nation by far.

- In a recent study, "Proficient vs. Prepared: Disparities between State Tests and the NAEP," Kentucky's differences in scores are in the bottom quartile in the country, thanks in part to its adoption of more rigorous standards and high-quality assessments.

- According to the Data Quality Campaign, Kentucky has implemented all 10 actions to ensure effective data use among teachers, policymakers and parents-- making it among the state leaders in effective educational data use. The average among states was 7.0 actions; only three states including Kentucky have implemented all 10.

- In a report by the Education Commission of the States (ECS), Kentucky's online School Report Card was singled out as one of only eight nationwide that was easy to find, informative and readable.

Should the Alaska State Board continue to create its new mission, vision, and strategic plan internally, there should not be any additional costs (other than time) related to this recommendation. However, should DEED determine the need for outside consultation to assist in developing a statewide strategic plan, additional costs would be incurred. (See **Recommendation 6.5.1** related to the cost of developing a statewide technology plan.)

1.4 STATE BOARD POLICY MANUAL

Findings

DEED has not conducted a comprehensive regulations review since 2010. Review of documents and emails reveals there were no official findings from the contractor performing that review, and the result of it was "a cleanup of several regulations."

The purpose of the 2010 review was to determine whether the burden of regulations could be lifted from the districts. Two contractors were hired to review the regulations and make suggestions. The State Board of Education (State Board) saw the initial result of that review in September 2010 and was asked to comment. It was determined that not as many regulations could be taken off the books as had originally been hoped. Currently there are no State Board members who were members at the time of the 2010 review. Interviews with Board members indicate that the process for updating regulations is *a work in progress; we are working on this* or *there is no regular process that I am aware of.* Interviews also indicate there is no established committee or subcommittee charged with regular regulations reviews and updates.

There is no reference to regulations on the State Board website, although the Board's bylaws, dated October 2012, are cited on the website. The Bylaws outline the Board's duties, the commissioner's duties, and provide other general information. The bylaws include the Board's vision and mission statements from 2003. While the mission statement is the same as noted on the DEED website, the vision statement in the bylaws is different and has not been updated.

One district leader summarized what the review team learned in several interviews when he said, *our district receives memos from DEED telling us a policy or regulation is going to change, but not specific suggestions for how we are to*

adapt to the change. So I have staff go to the new legislation and we try to figure it out on our own.

Recommendation 1.4.1

Ensure that the State Board of Education maintains an up-to-date online policy, regulations, and bylaws manual aligned to the State Board's Strategic Plan, and assign a subcommittee to review and update all documents on a regularly scheduled basis. (Tier 1)

Every policy adopted by the State Board should include a timeline for demonstrated results and provide a specific review timeline or criteria for a policy review cycle. This allows for full disclosure to the local districts that are responsible for implementing the policy and assures the public that the board is not walking away from an issue once the policy, rule, or regulation has been created.

Implementation of this recommendation will require board member and subcommittee time and staff resources, and will be an ongoing process.

To assist districts in clearly understanding the state's policies and procedures and to ensure consistency of implementation of the policies and procedures in all districts, many state departments of education post their policy manuals online along with helpful information to use the manual. For example, the North Carolina State Board of Education (NCSBE) publishes their manual online to ensure all stakeholders are moving in the same direction with regard to their state's strategic plan. The manual can be found at: http://sbepolicy.dpi.state.nc.us.

The online NCSBE manual is an electronic representation of the currently adopted policy manual, created to provide an easily accessible online reference that is updated as policies and procedures change. It does not reflect updating activities currently in progress, which have not received NCSBE approval. Policies listed in the Policy Manual Table of Contents are grouped according to the five strategic priorities of the NCSBE and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) Coordinated Plan of Work. In addition to the policy manual, the website also has helpful information and tools for stakeholders' use. These include:

- "Click here" to search Policy Manual by topic or key word;
- NCSBE Policy Manual Table of Contents;
- Administrative Procedures Act (APA) Policy Listing;
- What's New —Updated NCSBE Policies;
- Need Information Regarding NCSBE Policies—Who to Call; and
- Visit the State Public Schools Website.

The Nebraska State Board of Education Policy Reference Manual is a collection of three different types of policies. Each page is identified in the upper right-hand corner by type of policy in the following manner:

A. Procedural Policies of the State Board regarding its own operations and meetings

B. Internal Policy Directives of the State Board regarding department operations, which provide direction and/or authority to the Commissioner

C. General Policy Statements regarding education in Nebraska that are not included in state regulations or state plans or agreements filed with the federal government

The National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) has a wealth of information related to developing policies and can be a good resource for the Alaska State Board in implementing this recommendation. NASBE also has a website called, *State Innovations that* provides concise examples of the policymaking experiences of particular state boards of education. These reports may serve as a source of new ideas in Alaska's policymaking, contacts to enable cross-state networking on key issues, and benchmarking. They are available at: http://www.nasbe.org/our-resources/publications/state-innovations.

1.5 COMMISSIONER'S EVALUATION INSTRUMENT

Findings

The evaluation tool used to evaluate the DEED commissioner of education should be revised to reflect best practices with a well-developed job description reflecting statutory requirements and the Board's strategic goals.

The current evaluation instrument, dated December 2015, asks the State Board of Education members to provide comments on the following seven areas using a bulleted style format:

1. Board Relations
2. Leadership
3. Communication
4. Department Leadership
5. Response to Legislature
6. Work Traits
7. Other

The instrument also requires that Board members list the Commissioner's most significant achievements or successes in the last six months and to list at least three areas on which the Commissioner most needs to focus attention in the next six months.

Interviews indicate that the results of the evaluation are not tabulated, but are given to the Commissioner as they are turned in, minus the board member's name. Interviews of board members could not confirm whether all board members participated in the evaluation. Interviews also indicated that the current Board was "shocked" when they realized there was no existing or clear process in place for selecting a new commissioner. One board member stated that the process was *all verbal and anecdotal; no data was used in the evaluation*.

The evaluation instrument is not aligned to the strategic plan nor is it aligned to a clear commissioner of education position description. When asked if a position description exists for the Commissioner, DEED referred the team to state statute AS 14.07.145, as shown in **Exhibit 1-4** on the following page**.**

EXHIBIT 1-4
ALASKA STATUTE
DUTIES OF THE COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT

AS 14.07.145

(a) The board shall appoint the commissioner of education and early development subject to the approval of the governor. The commissioner shall be the principal executive officer of the department.

(b) The commissioner shall be appointed without regard to political affiliation and shall have at least a master's degree with five years' experience in the field of education since receiving it, with at least three of the five years in an exclusively administrative position.

(c) The commissioner serves at the pleasure of the board and may not be appointed by the board for a fixed term.

(d) The commissioner shall receive the salary set out in AS 39.20.080.

(e) The commissioner shall employ and remove all classified personnel in the department subject to AS 39.25 (State Personnel Act). The commissioner may employ and remove personnel in the exempt or partially exempt service subject to the approval of the board. Personnel in the exempt or partially exempt service have a right of appeal to the board if they are removed.

Source: Alaska Statute 14.07.145

Recommendation 1.5.1

Revise the instrument and process for evaluating the commissioner of education to reflect best practices. (Tier 1)

High performing states use an evaluation instrument with specific, weighted, performance criteria that is tied directly to the state's strategic plan and a clear position description of the commissioner's responsibilities.

All board members should be trained in the use of the new instrument. By implementing this recommendation, the Board will evaluate the Commissioner on specific criteria designed to move the state forward in achieving its goals. The evaluation and its process will be more objective than subjective, as it has been in past years.

Since Alaska is a member of CCSSO (Council of Chief State School Officers), they can turn to this organization to seek evaluation models that may be appropriate for Alaska. CCSSO was contacted for the cost of such services and the review

team was informed that the price is negotiable.

Exhibit 1-5 below shows the evaluation instrument used by the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. The state of Massachusetts is among the highest academically performing states.[17]

EXHIBIT 1-5
MASSACHUSETTS BOARD OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
2014-15 PERFORMANCE CRITERIA FOR
COMMISSIONER OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

The following performance criteria are designed to focus on: Roles, Accountabilities, and Goals while promoting measureable outcomes that are realistic and attainable. These criteria are important functions of the Commissioner. The Board is recommending setting these function areas into priorities that will set the Commissioner's work plan and distribution of his time and efforts.

Chief State School Officer (25%)

- Develop and implement clear strategy for Level 4 and 5 districts and schools
- Lead the effective rollout and implementation of major initiatives including RETELL, the educator evaluation system, the PARCC "test drive," and others.
- Ensure effective engagement of district leaders by incenting, motivating, measuring and communicating progress of efforts to close proficiency gaps and raise student performance in underperforming districts.

Lead the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) (25%)

- Set the vision, approve the strategies, and establish a culture that promotes the Board's mission statement
- Manage within the parameters of DESE's budget to achieve goals, including:
    - Ensure that the DESE is structured, staffed and aligned across all affected centers to meet its annual operational targets and stated goals, within the limitations of DESE's budget and state hiring parameters
- Complete or make substantial progress on strategic initiatives for the Board's five focus areas:
    - Educator Effectiveness;

[17] http://www.forbes.com/sites/jamesmarshallcrotty/2014/09/29/if-massachusetts-were-a-country-its-students-would-rank-9th-in-the-world/#43dfa97b21b1

- Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment;
- Accountability and Assistance;
- Wrap-Around Supports and Engagement for Students and Families; and
- School and Classroom Culture

- Oversee implementation of College & Career Readiness recommendations and strategy; Increase diversity within the DESE staff, and within the Advisory Groups

Managing External Relations (20%)

- Manage relationships and communications to maximize alignment of external stakeholders (e.g., Legislature, Governor's Office/EOE, MTA, AFT-MA, MASS, MASC, principals' associations, business groups, foundations) with Board's overall priorities and goals.

- Engage and responsively communicate with the field and citizens regarding major Board and Department initiatives.

- Effectively lead the discussion/communications regarding Massachusetts's adoption of Common Core State Standards and Assessments.

Board Support/Effective Interactions (20%)

- Effectively interact with members of the Board

- Engage Board members in setting the strategic vision for DESE and discussing DESE priorities and local/national policy issues relevant to Massachusetts

- Keep the Board updated on subjects necessary for the Board to fulfill its role

- Receive positive feedback from Board members during annual performance review process

National Leadership (10%)

- Chair the Partnership for the Assessment of College and Career Readiness Governing Board – articulate multi-state goals and work to accomplish them

- Represent Massachusetts in the Council of Chief State School Officers

- Position Massachusetts to benefit from best practices nationally and internationally

Rating Structure

- Outstanding = 5
- Very Good = 4
- Satisfactory = 3
- Needs Improvement = 2
- Unsatisfactory = 1

Source: Memorandum to Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, June 23, 2015.

Recommendation 1.5.2

Create a position description for the Alaska commissioner of education that is in alignment with the State Board of Education strategic goals and Alaska statutory requirements. (Tier 1)

In addition, the position description may play a role in certain legal situations in which it is critical that roles and responsibilities of the commissioner have been specified – for example, when the commissioner is unable to fulfill job requirements because of a disability.

This page intentionally left blank.

2 OBJECTIVE 2: RESULTS-BASED MEASURES

Objective 2: Determine whether or not the department's results-based measures demonstrate effectiveness and efficiency of the department's core services, goals, programs and objectives.

Overview and Summary of the Conclusion for Objective 2

The performance measures in place in Alaska represent a traditional set of initiatives that lack clarification and a logical sequence to effectively measure student progress. This is not unlike assessment programs in states throughout the nation, yet being like other states is not a legitimate excuse for the various ways DEED collects student performance information.

DEED is caught between two policy and philosophical views. On the one hand, the United States Department of Education (USDOE) imposes absolute requirements that must be met in order to receive millions of dollars in federal aid. Alaska must create a performance measurement system that meets certain guidelines for approval by USDOE. At the other end of the spectrum are state leaders who represent the view that Alaska should determine its own policies without interference from the federal government, and believe the USDOE requirements are overreaching in nature. DEED is challenged by the need to be responsive to both of these two different policy and philosophical views.

DEED has lost some degree of support during the rollout of the Alaska Measures of Progress (AMP) testing program. The vendor, whose lack of experience in large-scale testing became evident as test reports began to be made public, is no longer providing assessment services in Alaska.

Alaska measures of external and internal goals are blurred and sometimes create competing outcomes. The highest priority performance results can be difficult to ascertain. In the process, educators, parents, legislative leaders, and even some DEED personnel are left with a lack of understanding that can erode support over time.

Given the changes in state leadership, DEED has a unique opportunity at this time to address the weaknesses of assessment programs and build on the strengths of what works to impact student performance. These opportunities include:

- A new State Board of Education appointed by the governor with a mandate fostered in part by the new governor's priorities and expectations.

- The retirement of the previous commissioner and the opportunity to hire a new commissioner who is likely to be philosophically aligned with the governor and State Board of Education.

- The passage of a new federal approach through reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Act, giving states much wider latitude for state and local control of the use of federal funds.

- The opportunity to create a new assessment system that meets federal guidelines and replace the recently eliminated existing federally required standardized testing program.

- The development of a new strategic plan by the State Board of Education that has the potential to bring coordination and alignment to and a focus on student performance as a priority in Alaska.

Findings

2.1 DEED PERFORMANCE MEASURES

DEED's results-based measures are not sufficient to measure the department's success in fulfilling its mission.

The various accountability systems utilized by DEED to measure the performance of local school districts do not demonstrate clear alignment with the stated mission of DEED or with the outcomes envisioned in DEED's working strategic plan, the Alaska Education Plan. It is difficult to determine which, if any, of these measures are of consequence for students, schools, districts, or for DEED itself.

Alaska has a number of accountability systems designed to measure the performance of students, schools, and DEED as a state agency. These performance measures include desired outcomes identified by each of the following accountability systems.

1) Alaska Education Plan – this plan is currently the strategic plan that has guided the state's education system and is up for renewal/review at the current time. The plan is the attempt to meet the mission of the state's education and focuses on performance outcomes related to student graduation outcomes.

2) Office of Management and Budget Performance Indicators – the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) creates the Alaska state government's performance indicators that include all department and agencies. DEED has a set of criteria related to the core services of DEED. These criteria include:

- **Distribute Public School Funding to school districts and other educational institutions.**
  Ensure funding is appropriately distributed to recipients based on legislative appropriation and by statute and in accordance with the foundation formula, other formula programs, or legislative intent for funding outside the primary funding formulas

- **Provide Fiscal Accountability, Compliance and Oversight**
  Ensure the department effectively and efficiently manages state, federal and other funding by providing comprehensive fiscal and administrative services.

- **Develop, implement and maintain School Effectiveness Programs**
  Assist school districts by providing programs, technical on-site and distance-delivery support, and early intervention services in efforts to increase the statewide graduation rate

- **Maintain Active Partnerships for Pre-K through 20 and lifelong learning**
  Provide opportunities for, and collaborate with government entities, and other public and private organizations to engage in Active Partnerships in pursuit of state educational goals

3) Alaska Measures of Progress (to be phased out after 2016) – Annual performance measures as required by the United States Department of Education to receive federal funds and include mathematics and English Language assessments administered to each of Grades 3-10. The AMP was previously intended by DEED to be used to assess local school district effectiveness.

In a number of cases performance measures (such as graduation rates) are found to be the same or similar for a variety of performance initiatives. These tend to be mandated federal reporting metrics that may broadly overlap with the state's strategic plan or other state-based initiatives, but are not explicitly aligned with the mission and vision of DEED. As such, existing performance measures are not sufficient to measure the department's success or achievements in fulfilling its mandate.

The Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE) has also written about the need to align state education agency organization with its school improvement objectives, not federal compliance metrics.[18]

Two of four OMB performance indicators are tied to financial compliance as required by the state of Alaska, but are not aligned to DEED's constitutional mission to ensure quality standards-based instruction to improve academic achievement for all students.

As a result of these multiple performance initiatives, it is difficult to ascertain the most important measures of school performance or the metrics by which the Department measures its own success.

With the development of the assessment program tied to higher Alaska content standards, it is likely to become even more important to align mission, strategies, and goals in determining key performance measures for Alaskan schools and students.

State Board of Education members also expressed a lack of understanding about performance measures either currently in place or to be developed. One member stated: *Board members are not aware of results based measures.* Another board member indicated that the former strategic plan *was not a plan and was not measureable*. DEED staff commented that the only performance measures they were familiar with were those federally mandated reporting numbers that DEED is required to provide in order to continue to receive various federal funding streams. A further comment indicated that it is *always difficult* to get measurable goals from DEED.

[18] http://www.crpe.org/sites/default/files/pub_capacity%20challenge_dec13_0.pdf

In a survey of DEED staff and district superintendents conducted by the review team, less than one third (31 percent) of responding superintendents either agreed or strongly agreed that DEED's results-based measures are able to demonstrate the effectiveness of the department's core services, goals, measures, and objectives. In the open comments section of the survey, one DEED employee commented that the results-based measures are *relied upon too heavily, causing an atmosphere where people have learned how to circumvent the system in order to achieve false results*. Another DEED respondent stated, *although the department's results-based measures provide some very valuable information and data, they are not widely utilized or understood*.

Through onsite interviews across Alaska a major theme was mentioned repeatedly; few if any local educators and/or community members were familiar with the DEED performance objectives. Those unfamiliar with these performance objectives include some who even work for DEED.

Tension between the priorities of local school districts and federal testing requirements is ubiquitous across states. In each state, including Alaska, an effective system of assessment needs to be mission-driven with a focus on top priority performance indicators and a set of consequences that will bring credibility to the performance measures produced through the assessment system. Firstly, performance measures are not useful to improving education if there is not agreement on their purpose. Secondly, a lack of credibility where systems of accountability and assessment are concerned can cost the state millions of dollars in failed initiatives, as discussed below.

A group of approximately 19 Alaska superintendents recently sent a memo to the State Board of Education outlining key factors about Alaska Measures of Progress (AMP) that have raised credibility questions. In the memo sent to the State Board of Education titled AMP Testing and Accountability Programs, the superintendent's shared concerns included:

- *The Alaska Standards (and performance measures) that were adopted do align to a large extent over 90% with the Common Core Standards that were being promoted during 2012. According to the document, the plan answers these fundamental questions: What is Alaska's vision for its schools and students? What are our goals? What attributes and skills do*

we want high school graduates to possess? What actions will meet these goals and make this vision a reality?

- *Is the current system what is best for our students?*
- *Is the current system the best for our staff and community?*
- *Is the current system the best for public education across our state?*
- *Unfortunately, we believe the answer is no…We also look at the goals and vision set out by the State School Board and we do not feel that we are meeting those with our current plan. In short, the vision and goals in the Alaska Education Plan are our destination. The actions are the roadmap. Knowing where we want to go, we can determine if our expenditures of money and effort are efficiently and effectively getting us there. The public, having a clear vision for our schools and students, can measure performance against goals.*

Given the apparent lack of alignment between vision/mission and performance measures, the timely need to foster trust, understanding, and support between the department and the state's school districts, as well as the public, given the agency's recent shift on the AMP assessment, DEED should create an aligned management system focused on a set of performance measures designed to meet current and foreseeable educational challenges and requirements.

While compliance with federal requirements is often a driver for states' adoption of performance measures, Alaska must create an aligned system that is meaningful for the state. Without a system designed to meet the challenges and goals of the state of Alaska, the success rate among schools, districts and the community could be adversely impacted. The failure of AMP to be accepted and its ultimate abandonment (and loss of millions of dollars in state investment) offers an example of why the credibility (or "buy in") of the assessment system is essential. While the implementation of any assessment system may face technical glitches or require a series of improvements, such initiatives cannot withstand or overcome significant, or even typical challenges if they lack credibility among stakeholders.

According to the Forum on Educational Accountability (FEA), *An effective education system must be rooted in more than state compliance with federal accountability requirements. Although sanctions imposed by the federal or state government may force schools to engage in a great deal of activity, the educational system America needs requires more than compliance — it requires contributions from every teacher, parent, local school board member and student, along with the engaged support of the community.*[19]

The Alaska administrator's organization has complained about measures that appear to be contradictory and/or redundant. Having an assessment system that is aligned with state standards, while recognizing the uniqueness of local needs, requires a delicate balance and that will ultimately address the current lack of focus with respect to existing measures.

Trust is likely to be restored through an aligned assessment system built through the transparent involvement of educators, parents, students and communities. Appropriate stakeholder involvement will be key to the validation and acceptance of any new proposed system of assessment.

Passage of The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) appears to offer a unique opportunity to address this issue and could serve as a vehicle to help address the need for alignment.

Recommendation 2.1.1

Clarify top priority performance indicators and develop a unified measurement system designed to assess these priority indicators. (Tier 1):

According to the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) report *The Three Essentials: Improving Schools Requires District Vision, District/ State Support, and Principal Leadership,* vision and/or mission is the first element necessary for accountability and autonomy related to performance.[1] *Without a vision/mission tied to a sound and comprehensive strategic plan, the flavor of the month*

[19] http://www.edaccountability.org/AssessmentFullReportJUNE07.pdf

approach will prevail, and low performing schools will not have the continuity of direction and support they need to become functional and successful schools.[20]

According to key best practices recognized by the Baldrige Framework and quality management principles, the alignment of vision, programs/strategies and performance measures and outcomes ties directly with the findings of the SREB report.

Many organizations, including schools, districts and state education departments, fail to recognize this fundamental principle of high performing organizations, often to the peril of these organizations doing many "Random Acts of Improvement" and thus often wasting time and resources on efforts that have not been demonstrated to improve student performance.[21]

A new strategic plan is being developed by the State Board of Education and will presumably create another set of measures. At the time of writing, those measures have not been developed. As one board member indicated, *We don't know yet how we will measure success.*

At the same time, individual school systems such as the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District are spending $9,000 to use the performance indicators developed by the Council of Great City Schools. Using the performance indicators developed by organizations outside of Alaska and independent of DEED attests to the concern about the appropriateness and adequacy of current measures and outcomes.

Providing clear, prioritized indicators and then developing a set of objective metrics to assess performance against these indicators must play an integral part of the development of any new strategy for the department, or refinement of the existing Alaska Education Plan. DEED staff, the State Board of Education, the Governor's Office, and local educators should be proactively engaged in order to create an aligned system driven by the vision/mission of DEED that will be effective, credible, and accepted.

---

[1]"The Three Essentials: Improving Schools Require District Vision, District and State Support, and Principal Leadership", Southern Regional Education Board. August, 2010, p. 25.
[20] Ibid. 3.
[21] See North Carolina Partnership for Excellence, Quality Training Materials, Raleigh, North Carolina, 1999-2010. http://www.partnership4excellence.org

By creating and implementing a unified measurement system designed to assess priority indicators, Alaska can bring clarity to educators, students, parents and the community regarding student performance. In addition, the state may be able to reduce costs, and eliminate the cost inefficiencies of "piecemeal" changes, freeing funds to be used for educational programming.

The Baldrige Framework for Organizational Effectiveness identifies clarity of purpose and outcomes as major drivers in best practices for improved performance. From mission/vision to goals and strategies to achieve these goals, organizations can focus on a single, agreed-upon set of indicators to determine the success of their processes. This best practice is highly applicable education organizations.

In addition, the SREB provides best practices related to the role of state education agencies in working with school districts and schools. Clarity of required performance and corresponding indicators of performance is a best practice of their findings.

The fiscal implications would primarily involve the use of DEED personnel and can be efficiently implemented through a "trainer of trainers" model. Potential Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) funds could be used for this purpose with potential costs ranging from $5,000 - $15,000 depending upon the depth of the model.

The following crosswalk (**Exhibit 2-1**) is an excerpt from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) Strategic Plan for FY 2015-2019 that illustrates how its state education performance metrics (benchmarks) align with each component of the state's strategy.

EXHIBIT 2-1
STATE BENCHMARKS AND TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY STRATEGIES

State Benchmark	Texas Education Agency Strategy
High school graduation rate **Percentage of graduates earning foundation high school diploma** **Percentage of graduates earning an endorsement with their high school diploma differentiated by endorsement** **Percentage of graduates earning distinguished achievement diploma**	1.1.1 Foundation School Program - Equalized Operations 1.1.2 Foundation School Program - Equalized Facilities 1.2.1 Statewide Educational Programs 1.2.2 Achievement of Students at Risk 1.2.3 Students with Disabilities 1.2.4 School Improvement and Support Programs 2.1.1 Assessment and Accountability System 2.2.1 Technology/Instructional Materials 2.2.2 Health and Safety 2.3.1 Improving Educator Quality/Leadership 2.3.2 Agency Operations
Percentage of recent high school graduates enrolled at a Texas college or university **Percentage of high school graduates receiving other post-secondary training or certificate**	1.1.1 Foundation School Program - Equalized Operations 1.1.2 Foundation School Program - Equalized Facilities 1.2.1 Statewide Educational Programs 1.2.2 Achievement of Students at Risk 1.2.4 School Improvement and Support Programs 2.1.1 Assessment and Accountability System 2.2.1 Technology/Instructional Materials 2.3.2 Agency Operations
Percentage of students who demonstrate college ready performance through taking the SAT, ACT, or AP exams **Percentage of students earning Level III: Advanced Academic Performance on the annual state assessments**	1.2.1 Statewide Educational Programs 2.1.1 Assessment and Accountability System 2.3.1 Improving Educator Quality/Leadership 2.3.2 Agency Operations
Percentage of students who attend schools or districts rated as met standard and the number of students who attend schools that earn one of the three academic distinctions	2.1.1 Assessment and Accountability System 2.3.1 Educator Quality/Leadership 2.3.2 Agency Operations

Percentage of Texas high school students who need remediation	1.1.1 Foundation School Program - Equalized Operations 1.1.2 Foundation School Program - Equalized Facilities 2.1.1 Assessment and Accountability System 2.3.2 Agency Operations
Percentage of students, broken down by grade-level, taking Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate exams, additionally, the percentage of students making a three or higher	1.2.1 Statewide Educational Programs 2.3.2 Agency Operations
Percentage of students from third grade and above who are able to read at or above grade level **Percentage of students from third grade and above who perform at or above grade level in math**	1.2.1 Statewide Educational Programs 1.2.2 Achievement of Students at Risk 2.1.1 Assessment and Accountability System 2.3.1 Improving Educator Quality/Leadership 2.3.2 Agency Operations
Number of students served under local governance or choice options (e.g., charter schools, open-enrollment charters, home-rule districts, intra-district transfers, etc.)	1.1.1 Foundation School Program - Equalized Operation 1.2.4 School Improvement and Support Programs 2.3.2 Agency Operations
Number of teachers certified through alternative programs	1.2.4 School Improvement and Support Programs 2.3.1 Improving Educator Quality/Leadership 2.3.3 State Board for Educator Certification 2.3.6 Certification Exam Administration
Number of pre-kindergarten age students served through Texas Early Education Model **Number of pre-kindergarten age students being served by a full-day program and the number of students being served by a half-day program**	1.1.1 Foundation School Program - Equalized Operations 1.1.2 Foundation School Program - Equalized Facilities 1.2.1 Statewide Educational Programs 1.2.2 Achievement of Students at Risk 1.2.3 Students with Disabilities 1.2.4 School Improvement and Support Programs 2.3.2 Agency Operations
Percentage of Texas high school students graduating with six hours or more of college credit	1.1.1 Foundation School Program - Equalized Operations 1.1.2 Foundation School Program - Equalized Facilities 1.2.1 Statewide Educational Programs 1.2.2 Achievement of Students at Risk 1.2.4 School Improvement and Support Programs 2.1.1 Assessment and Accountability System 2.2.1 Technology/Instructional Materials 2.3.2 Agency Operations

Percentage of students who are awarded a technical certification upon completion of high school	1.1.1 Foundation School Program - Equalized Operations 1.1.2 Foundation School Program - Equalized Facilities 1.2.1 Statewide Educational Programs 1.2.2 Achievement of Students at Risk 1.2.3 Students with Disabilities 1.2.4 School Improvement and Support Programs 2.1.1 Assessment and Accountability System 2.2.1 Technology/Instructional Materials 2.2.2 Health and Safety 2.3.1 Improving Educator Quality/Leadership 2.3.2 Agency Operations

Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA) Strategic Plan for FY 2015-19.

Recommendation 2.1.2

Develop an accountability system whereby performance measures and outcomes will result in specific consequences for students and/or schools. (Tier 1)

An aligned system of accountability based on standards and measurement instruments is a hallmark of the State of Massachusetts' success. Massachusetts is consistently rated as the highest performing state on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the primary standardized testing programs in which all states participate. In other areas such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and other assessments, Massachusetts is frequently among the highest performing states. Other chief state school officers, through the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), have learned a great deal about the high performance of Massachusetts.

Consequences are a key component of any system of accountability, and should recognize and reward high performance while providing support and/or possible interventions for less than acceptable performance.

Currently, there are no consequences associated with the performance indicators currently being collected by DEED. The following principles for accountability systems for SEAs were articulated by the Forum on Educational Accountability (FEA), a national education working group,

- Accountability decisions for student learning are the responsibility of states
- Accountability decisions made must be valid based on appropriate and accurate data.

- Accountability decisions must benefit students and support student learning.

The State of Alaska must determine what assessment initiative is adequate to meet the growth and proficiency targets for students. However, there is no evidence that such an analysis has been made or validated. Alaska must answer the questions: Is the state's system of educational assessments and performance measures designed to meet Alaska's educational needs? And, how do we know whether it is doing so? In order to answer these questions, DEED should consider receiving technical assistance through collaboration with the CCSSO Accountability Systems initiative. Alaska is a member of the CCSSO and has access to a variety of services offered by the organization.

CCSSO works with states to create accountability systems that ensure every student has access to a high-quality education. States will achieve this goal by (1) driving school and district performance towards college and career readiness, (2) distinguishing performance in order to more meaningfully target supports and interventions to the students most in need, (3) providing timely, transparent data to spur action at all levels, and (4) fostering innovation and continuous improvement throughout the system.

State education agency best practices are provided throughout the CCSSO training materials. See: http://ccsso.org/What_We_Do/Standards_Assessment_and_Accountability.html#sthash.cTAnOVOz.dpuf

There are no fiscal implications that would require additional financial resources.

This page intentionally left blank.

3 OBJECTIVES 3, 4, AND 10: AUTHORITY, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES, AND STATUTORILY DEFINED DUTIES

Objective 3: Identify DEED's authority to collect fees, conduct inspections, enforce state law, or impose penalties;

Objective 4: Recommend improvements to agency practices and procedures; and

Objective 10: Identify the extent to which DEED performs all of its statutorily defined duties.

Due to the interconnectedness of Public Works' findings related to Objectives 3, 4, and 10, the review team has combined its findings and recommendations for these objectives.

Overview and Summary of the Conclusion for Objectives 3, 4, and 10

Article 7, Section 1 of the Alaska Constitution directs the legislature to "establish and maintain a system of public schools open to all children of the State" and allows the State to "provide for other public educational institutions."

Title 44 of Alaska Statutes establishes the Department of Education and Early Development, enumerating the following duties:

1. Administer the state's program of education at the elementary, secondary, and adult levels, including, but not limited to, programs of vocational education and training, library services, and correspondence courses, but not including degree programs of postsecondary education;

2. Administer the historical library; and

3. Plan, finance, and operate related school and educational activities and facilities.

In statute and regulation, DEED and the State Board of Education are further charged to conduct and oversee a variety of functions, and empowered to issue policies governing education in the state. In pursuit of these statutory responsibilities, DEED enforces many state laws and administers several services and programs.

DEED places a high priority on statutory compliance and meeting all of the duties prescribed for state education agencies in state and federal law. In austere budget times, department leaders often reference statutory mandates to ensure that legal requirements are met while cuts are made to discretionary programs and services. During this review, the project team did not identify any areas of statutory non-compliance by DEED.

Several DEED offices including the Child Nutrition Program, Alaska State Council on the Arts, Division of Libraries, Archives and Museums, and Mt. Edgecombe High School currently issue fees to support programs and services. Current fee amounts, structures, policies, procedures, and statutes were reviewed for this report. Recommendations for rental fees for facilities at the new LAM Building can be found in **Recommendation 10.10.1.**

DEED also conducts inspections and issues penalties in several areas of educational and operational review. DEED offices including the Child Nutrition Program, Assessment and Accountability, Career and Technical Education, Special Education, Facilities, and Archives conduct some element of program, service or site inspection, some with penalty and sanction provisions for non-compliance. The project team reviewed current inspection policies, procedures, regulations, and statutes in preparation of this report. No deficiencies were noted in DEED's inspection and penalty operations and oversight.

The need for statutory and regulatory modifications was discussed in virtually every interview and meeting conducted for this review. The department has and will continue to make incremental changes to statutes and regulations when needed to reflect contemporary changes in policy and emerging practices in the field. This report has identified several areas where statutory modifications could lead to greater departmental effectiveness or efficiency, including:

- Alaska Statute 14.17.520, requiring school districts to spend at least 70 percent of their operating funds on instruction;

- Alaska Statute 14.20.015(b) stipulating requirements for teacher applicants to pass basic competency examinations; and

- The obligation created by Alaska's commitment in their NCLB waiver to use student achievement scores in evaluation its NCLB.

3.1 RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Findings

The Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) faces significant challenges in recruiting and retaining its workforce.

At the end of calendar year 2015, DEED had 55 vacant staff positions[22], which accounted for 15 percent of the agency's total PCN (Position Control Number) count of 364 positions for the FY 2015 Management Plan. Of these vacant positions, almost one-third (17 of 55) had been open for over a year, and some had been open for more than five years. While DEED was unable to fill some of these positions due to current budget limitations, others the department wanted to fill but faced challenges in recruiting and retaining employees.

Many of DEED's hiring challenges are endemic to government, such as:

- Lengthy and complex hiring processes;
- Negative image of government as an employer;
- Budget constraints and uncertainties; and
- Noncompetitive salaries (real or perceived).

Hiring and maintaining a strong workforce within Alaska state government is further complicated by competition among agencies (causing employees to frequently jump from one agency to another) and labor market shortages in certain areas.

In interviews, DEED leaders noted several positions where they face particular challenges in recruitment and retention. **Exhibit 3-1** lists these job classes and related challenges.

[22] "DEED Vacant Positions, as of December 31, 2015," data provided by DEED.

EXHIBIT 3-1
DEED EMPLOYEE RECRUITMENT & RETENTION CHALLENGES

Job Class	Challenge
Accountant IV	• Lack of upward mobility within the Department • Frequent turnover in the position (similar duties as Accountant V, so staff moves whenever an Accountant V position is vacated)
Analyst Programmer series	• Competing with private sector salaries • Inability to offer telework options
Audit/Review Analyst II	• Lack of upward mobility within the Department • Limited flexibility in position minimum qualifications (MQs) (no substitution for audit work experience allowed in place of three credits of auditing courses)
Database Specialist	• Competitive private sector salaries • Inability to offer telework options • Lack of upward mobility within Department
Education Administrator	• Limited number of applicants with experience in the field and understanding of issues unique to teaching in Alaska • Position salary is commensurate with equivalent positions in districts only requiring a 270-day contract
Education Specialist	• Limited number of applicants with requisite experience in the field who are willing to work for the full year • Salary level insufficient for applicants with requisite experience
Records Analyst III	• Small pool of qualified applicants • Only one lower position in this job class series in the state service
School Finance Specialist	• Unknown
Technical Engineer/Architect (Facilities	• Inadequate salary

Manager)	• Lack of work flexibility • Lack of creativity in the work

Source: DEED, 2016.

DEED's challenges in recruiting and retaining a stable workforce affect not only productivity within the department, but also at the local level. This was underscored in interviews conducted for this report as district leaders noted that high turnover at DEED translated to a lack of institutional knowledge/institutional memory that has at times delayed and complicated their work with the department.

It should be noted that virtually all of DEED's personnel practices are governed by human resource policies and procedures dictated by the Department of Administration Personnel & Labor Relations, based on legislation. Given the scope of this review, recommendations will only focus on areas that DEED can address within the department.

In interviews, staff indicated that they typically do not conduct exit interviews or administer any surveys to determine the reason the employee left the organization.

Recommendation 3.1.1

Elevate recruitment as a mission-critical activity for DEED leadership and involve the entire department in recruitment planning and implementation. (Tier 2)

Recruitment is often viewed exclusively as a human resources function. But DEED leadership, managers, and even line employees can all play a part in department recruitment activities. Workforce composition and competencies directly affect DEED's productivity, so managers should work with DEED's human resources staff person to develop enhanced recruitment practices that can produce results for their areas. DEED senior leadership can also play a part in recruitment activities by promoting employment opportunities in DEED at community and stakeholder meetings and by proactively seeking out qualified applicants.

No direct funding will be required to implement this recommendation.

Recommendation 3.1.2

Develop a departmental recruitment plan that aligns with DEED's strategic plan. (Tier 3)

This report recommends that DEED develop a strategic plan that has specific, measureable, attainable, realistic, timely (SMART) goals. (See **Recommendation 1.3.1**) The department's recruitment plan should be aligned with DEED's strategic plan and help map what the department aims to achieve through its recruitment efforts. This will help anticipate staffing needs rather than reacting to individual vacancies. This planning can also help DEED prioritize strategies and pool resources across the organization.

Given current budget limitations, it is unlikely that the department will have additional resources to develop a robust recruitment plan or program. Nonetheless, to the extent possible, DEED should leverage existing low-cost and no-cost opportunities to support its recruitment and retention efforts, including:

- Enhancing the work environment and creating a culture that values each employee;
- Providing venues for leadership staff to learn and share recruitment and retention best practices with each other (particularly as they reflect DEED's mission, vision and goals in the strategic planning process); and
- Creating opportunities for employees to learn and share with one another, encouraging better and open dialogues between employees and management.

Recommendation 3.1.3

Continue to identify the primary factors driving employee turnover and enhance employee retention efforts. (Tier 3)

Establishing a stable workforce starts with good recruitment and requires effective employee retention strategies. It is not cost effective to recruit and train talented employees only to lose them a short time later. In fact, 30 case studies assembled during 2012 research on the costs of employee turnover

demonstrated that it typically costs employers about one-fifth of a worker's salary to replace them.[23]

DEED should continue to identify the primary factors causing employee turnover through employee surveys and exit interviews, and to the extent possible, address the factors identified as driving away talented employees. The review team recognizes that challenges such as limited salary ranges and job classifications are beyond the control of the department; however, a purposeful employee retention effort will further improve the long-term return on investment in DEED's recruitment efforts.

No direct funding will be required to implement this recommendation. However, DEED will need to allocate appropriate staff time to identify factors driving turnover and develop retention strategies.

Recommendation 3.1.4

Continue to work with the Department of Administration (DOA) to address state government hiring and personnel challenges, and leverage private funding to help address salary challenges. (Tier 2)

As discussed in the findings above, many of the challenges DEED faces in recruiting and retaining top-level talent are rooted in burdensome and timely hiring processes established in state government personnel policies and regulations. DEED must continue its work with DOA to identify flexibilities and develop strategies that can help agency recruitment efforts.

Recruitment and retention challenges are not unusual for State Education Agencies (SEAs). In 2007, the Center on Education Policy noted that more than half of states (29) reported an inability to attract and retain qualified staff as a hindrance to implementing federal education programs.[24] State education officials pointed to a variety of obstacles to hiring and retaining employees including "uncompetitive pay scales dictated by state legislatures and the

[23] Boushey, Heather and Glynn, Sarah Jane, "There Are Significant Business Costs to Replacing Employees," November 16, 2012, pages 1-3, available at: https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/16084443/CostofTurnover0815.pdf

[24] Center on Education Policy, "Educational Architects: Do State Education Agencies Have the Tools Necessary to Implement NCLB?," 2007.

inability to compete with the business community for highly skilled employees, especially data and technology specialists."[25]

Successful state education leaders have found that one key strategy is to build relationships that can be beneficial now and in the future. Former Vermont and New York State Education Commissioner Richard Mills kept long lists of talented people he met, as well as lists of contacts he could tap, in anticipation of possible vacancies.

In tight budget times, education leaders have also leveraged private funding in creative ways to address salary challenges. Former Colorado Commissioner of Education Dwight Jones worked with the Colorado State Board Of Education to provide more competitive compensation to attract top talent while simultaneously negotiating private support from various foundations that contributed to additional key hires. DEED could similarly seek out partnership opportunities with local and state-based foundations committed to improving Alaska's educational system.

With limited budget resources available, DEED should initially focus on low-cost or no-cost recruitment and retention opportunities using existing staff. DEED should also actively pursue external funding opportunities (such as private foundations) that may supplement limited state funds needed to build and maintain a strong workforce.

3.2 TEACHER EVALUATION

Findings

DEED has halted the development of a process of utilizing student achievement scores in educator evaluation that was neither statistically viable nor practical to implement. However, proponents of such a system may seek to resurrect it once a new testing program is adopted to replace the Alaska Measures of Progress (AMP) assessment system.

During the past several years, there has been increased interest in the application of student scores on standardized achievement tests to evaluation

[25] Center on Education Policy, "Educational Architects: Do State Education Agencies Have the Tools Necessary to Implement NCLB?," 2007.

systems for K-12 educators, teachers in particular. This has been driven in part by the interest of states in securing federal Race to the Top grants and waivers from some of the requirements of the No Child Left Behind legislation. Implementation of systems of evaluation that use student test data was a criterion of eligibility for both programs.

Gauges of teacher effectiveness are of very legitimate concern to parents, students, administrators, policymakers, and to teachers themselves. Evaluation systems should only employ measures that are valid (they measure what they purport to measure) and reliable (what they measure is evaluated consistently across evaluators and evaluation tools).

Problems with both validity and reliability have occurred with the use of student test data in teacher evaluation systems. Using only rates of student proficiency has been deemed inappropriate and unfair, since teachers work with students who have differing levels of proficiency.[26] States instead chose to implement systems that track student growth on standardized tests. These systems are referred to as value-added metrics (VAM). However, problems with VAM systems have produced frustration among teachers and administrators.[27]

These concerns are reinforced by evidence. A study by the Network for Educator Effectiveness found that the validity of value-added models is questionable at best:[28]

- The models do not use tests that are instructionally sensitive (i.e., aligned to what a teacher is teaching). Students' scores on global tests reflect many factors and lifetime opportunity to learn, not just what an individual teacher taught in one class. In addition, many tests do not measure valued skills, such as reasoning.

- Students are not randomly assigned to teachers. Some teachers are assigned academically talented students and others assigned struggling

[26] French, R. & Tagami, T. (2016). Teachers frustrated over evaluations tied to test results. Atlanta Journal Constitution. Retrieved from http://www.myajc.com/news/news/local-education/teachers-frustrated-over-evaluations-tied-to-test-/nqGBR/
[27] Ibid.
[28] Bergin, C. (2015). Using Student Achievement Data to Evaluate Teachers. Columbia, MO: Network for Educator Effectiveness.

students in non-random ways. Teachers in high-poverty schools or classes tend to have lower value-added scores. To address this, statisticians may use "proportionality analyses," in which teachers in high poverty schools are only compared to other teachers in high poverty schools. Statistically controlling for such pre-existing differences in students and schools helps level the playing field somewhat, but student achievement is still influenced by many factors that are not part of these statistical models. It is problematic to ascribe differences in test scores to an individual teacher. Correlational data does not prove causation.

- Students are often negatively affected by multiple teachers in a particular subject each year, in addition to support specialists. This makes statistical parsing out of an individual teacher's contribution difficult. In addition, it makes linking each student to a teacher challenging, error-prone, and time consuming. Districts need technical support and good data systems to attempt linking individual students with a "teacher of record." Some districts do this on a scheduled "claiming" day.

- The models are not transparent. Their derivation is difficult for non-statisticians to understand. Many districts do not have personnel with the highly specific skills needed to develop or implement them, so districts rely on universities or commercial entities to help them. Some of these entities keep their proprietary techniques secret. (Bergin, p. 2)

Reported difficulties with value-added metrics[29] are supported by additional recent research from the University of Pennsylvania and the American Institutes for Research. In addition, research conducted by the American Educational Research Association concluded, *Many states and districts have incorporated VAM in a comprehensive system to evaluate teachers, principals, and educator preparation programs. There are considerable risks of misclassification and misinterpretation in the use of VAM to inform these evaluations.*[30] The risks are

[29] Steinberg, M. & Garrett, R. (2015). *Classroom Context and Measured Teacher Performance: What Do Teacher Observation Scores Really Measure?* Paper presented at the annual conference of the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, November 12-14, 2015. Retrieved from https://appam.confex.com/appam/2015/webprogram/Paper13735.html

[30] American Educational Research Association (2015). *AERA Statement on Use of Value-Added Models (VAM) for the Evaluation of Educators and Educator Preparation Programs.* Washington,

exacerbated when there are small numbers of students taking the test upon which teacher performance is judged. Approximately one-third of Alaska's schools have fewer than 100 students, and these already small student bodies are divided further among multiple grade levels and multiple teachers.

Even in states with much larger groups of students upon whose scores to base value-added calculations, problems have occurred. Development and implementation problems in the New York prompted the State Board of Regents to suspend for the next four years the use of student scores on statewide tests in teacher evaluation decisions.[31]

There are problems inherent in the measurement of educator impact on standardized student achievement scores. These well-documented problems are among the rationales for the decision by Congress to not include a requirement for the inclusion of measures of impact on student achievement scores in teacher evaluation systems. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which replaces the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, does not require specific types of educator evaluation measures.

Finally, it is important to note the concerns regarding the state's efforts to develop educator evaluation components based on student achievement test data. In interviews, the following comments from representative district and collaborating organizations were offered:

- *The teacher evaluation system is burdensome, and DEED didn't get support from superintendents and school boards. They did it because the feds made them do it, but it may go away now with ESSA.*

- *Adding the student performance elements is a statutory requirement, but it's a problem, especially for the smaller districts. It's scary and really challenging.*

DC: American Educational Research Association. Retrieved from http://edr.sagepub.com/content/early/2015/11/10/0013189X15618385.full.pdf+html

[31] Connally, K. (2016). *How Will ESSA Influence States' Teacher Quality Efforts?* EdCentral. Retrieved from http://www.edcentral.org/essa_teacherquality/

- *Superintendents are relieved [by ESSA provisions]. There's a sense that this gives us a chance to revisit the inclusion of achievement data.*

DEED staff members agreed with these concerns, indicating that the department is not adequately resourced to implement the evaluation component that is based on student achievement scores. Some noted that there is already discussion in the agency and among board members to drop this component of the evaluation system.

Recommendation 3.2.1

Avoid resurrection of statutory and policy language to include educator evaluation system components that are based on student achievement test data once a new assessment system replaces the AMP. (Tier 3)

The ESSA teacher quality provisions will go into effect later in 2016, ahead of the schedule for when Alaska was to have implemented educator evaluation based on student achievement data. The State Board took advantage of the ESSA latitude to drop such provisions at its March 2016 meeting. The action was further necessitated by the state's decision to halt the implementation of the AMP assessment, which would have provided assessment data that, among other things, would support the use of student achievement scores in teacher evaluation ratings.

The reasoning of and action by the State of New York and by the Alaska State Board of Education are instructive to future boards, the legislature, and to other locations. The New York State Board of Regents voted to suspend for the next four years the use of student scores on statewide tests in teacher evaluation decisions.[32]

Elimination of the use of student assessment data will result in savings of staff time at DEED and in local districts. The State Board's action will also save money related to components of the student assessment system. However, proponents of the use of student assessment data in teacher evaluations may seek to resurrect such a practice in statute and/or policy once a new assessment system is developed. Continued vigilance regarding this issue is warranted.

---

[32] Ibid.

This recommendation does not require statute adoption or revision, nor does it require additional funding.

3.3 TEACHER CERTIFICATION AND RENEWAL

Findings

The Teacher Certification section of the DEED Division of Teaching and Learning Support consistently receives favorable reviews for improvement of service. In the November 2015 survey, Teacher Certification received the most positive ratings from superintendents, with 58 percent choosing it as one of the programs in which DEED excels the most. The area received only a few ratings from superintendents that indicated a need for improvement (10 percent).

Comments by interviewees, such as those listed below, provide further evidence of the generally positive perspective regarding the Teacher Certification section:

- *Made great strides for turnaround for certification – kudos in this area.*
- *Several interviewed believe that teacher certification did a wonder job of reinventing itself and now has less red tape than ever before. Staff say they can call and get an answer in one day.*
- *Getting the whole process online has really streamlined the certificate renewal process. It's a user-friendly process. Two weeks turnaround compared to months in the past.*
- *Recertification is a pretty well run process.*
- *University of Alaska teacher prep graduates say that things are getting better with teacher certification. Turnaround time on processing licenses is way better than it used to be.*

While the Teacher Certification program at DEED was frequently and consistently cited for its responsiveness, Alaska teacher preparation programs do not produce sufficient numbers of candidates to meet the state's demand for teachers. A significant proportion of teachers come from outside the state; a senior administrator working with teacher preparation in Alaska put the proportion at 65 percent. Alaska has difficulty recruiting and retaining teachers in

some districts and schools. Given the need for teachers and the challenges of ensuring that out-of-state applicants are appropriately credentialed, districts rely heavily on the Teacher Certification section for support. In addition to the November 2015 survey responses, the following representative comments by interviewees reinforce the conclusion that districts find DEED generally to be attentive to their needs.

- *Teacher certification does a dynamite job. They're a shining star... I love 'em. They're always helpful. DEED's alternative licensure program was really good.*

- *They have been awesome this year. Struggle to get teachers. We have had ongoing national searches. I've regularly called for expedited licensing, or exceptions in the credentialing process. They've bent over backwards to help me.*

- *Staff say they can call and get an answer in one day. Voted as the best customer friendly division of DEED.*

- *Teacher certification in particular is an area in which DEED is very responsive and helpful.*

Commendation 3.A

The Teacher Certification section of DEED has improved significantly in recent years and typically processes teacher certificates and certificate renewals in a timely fashion. The Teacher Certification section is customer-oriented and responsive to districts in the processes related to educator credentialing.

3.4 TEACHER CERTIFICATION: NEW CANDIDATES

Findings

Alaska Statutes and DEED policies place unnecessary regulatory constraints on the processes of recruiting and credentialing of candidates for teaching positions.

There is a universal need among school districts across the nation to recruit and retain effective teachers. Recruitment and retention issues are especially acute in some Alaska districts and schools. Each year, a number of teachers are hired

from elsewhere to staff rural schools. Annual teacher turnover rates among rural districts range from 7 percent to 52 percent[33]. The Center for Alaska Education Policy Research reports about two-thirds of teachers working in Alaska were hired from outside of the state.[34] District and school leaders count on DEED to help facilitate the expeditious credentialing of these educators as well as the credentialing of educators from the state. However, some statutes/regulations unnecessarily hinder these processes.

There is helpful self-awareness among DEED staff that improvements are needed. In the November 2015 survey, DEED staff were less positive about the performance and service of Teacher Certification than were superintendents. Only 35 percent of DEED staff rated this area as one in which DEED excels. Twenty percent rated the area as being in need of improvement.

Regulatory and process barriers to efficient recruitment and credentialing of teachers include:

- **Archaic application process.** Much of the certificate application process is facilitated through an archaic system that relies on a hard copy, paper-based submission of applicant materials. Online, paperless technology for these purposes is not used. *It's pretty clunky*, said one interviewee. It was noted that the re-certification process is now online. Renewal applicants can load information about their renewal credit activities and pay the renewal fee via the internet.

- **Background checks.** The Teacher Certification section expedites the initial review of applications for teaching certificates. Then the application goes through the Department of Public Safety (DPS) background checks process, which is based upon fingerprints. DPS must digitize the prints prior to sending to the Federal Bureau of Investigation. It can take anywhere from two weeks to four months to get fingerprints cleared. The process is managed through a hard copy fingerprinting review system, even though the FBI, which maintains the fingerprints database, stopped accepting

[33] Alaska Teacher Placement (2016). *Alaska Teacher Supply & Demand.* Retrieved from http://www.alaskateacher.org/supply_and_demand.php
[34] Hill, A. & Hirshberg, D. (2013). *Alaska Teacher Turnover, Supply, and Demand: 2013 Highlights.* Retrieved from http://www.alaskateacher.org/downloads/2013TeacherTurnover.pdf

hard copy fingerprints in 2012. DEED staff and superintendents assert that this system impedes the expeditious processing of certificate applications. The National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) clearinghouse provides some information on criminal backgrounds of applicants, but there remains the possibility that for an extended period, a person with a criminal background may be serving in an Alaskan classroom.

- **Reciprocity with other states.** Reciprocal agreements with other states to facilitate the entrance of teachers from outside Alaska into the state's teaching force are fairly extensive. However, as one superintendent noted, the state *could improve joining in reciprocal certification with other states*. One of the organization leaders who works closely with both DEED and the districts agreed. *Sometimes applicants have to jump through unnecessary hoops. There is reciprocity with other states, but these hoops still cause problems in recruiting educators. There's lots of turnover, so they need to get this right.* A case in point of problems in reciprocity includes the state's requirement that applicants take and pass a basic competency exam. New teachers prepped in Alaska take the exam as part of their certification process. But teachers coming in from other states have to do this, even experienced teachers. The state accepts the basic competency exam from 12 other states; however, that leaves the competency testing issue unaddressed for dozens of other states.

The above concerns, documented through surveys and interviews, suggest that even though there is on overall positive attitude toward the Teacher Certification section at DEED, unnecessary problems occur for some applicants in the credentialing process. *In reality, some teachers can be teaching a full year without certification*, observed one organizational leader on behalf of districts and schools.

Recommendation 3.4.1

Replace the current hard copy, paper-based submission of initial certificate application materials with online, paperless technology. (Tier 1)

By implementing this recommendation, Alaska will facilitate the application process and speed up submission of requests for certification. Such a move to

reduce impediments is important for a state with such heavy recruitment needs and with such a vast recruitment territory.

The South Dakota Department of Education has a comprehensive website for completing an application for a teaching certificate. An online option for payment of the application fee is available. Additional materials include FAQs and step-by-step procedures for updating and renewing certificates. The website is: http://www.doe.sd.gov/oatq/teachercert.aspx

It should be noted that the savings projected to result from **Recommendations 7.1.1, 7.1.2, and 7.1.3** to consolidate the work of the Professional Teaching Practices Commission into the work of the DEED Office of Teacher Certification could be applied to the implementation of the online certification application process.

Recommendation 3.4.2

Implement an electronic fingerprint scanning process with the Department of Public Safety to expedite the background checks process. (Tier 1)

The Department of Public Safety (DPS) personnel are in the most favorable position to determine exemplary practices in Alaska. However, the State of New Mexico, a peer state for this review, has implemented a digital fingerprint scanning process for educator certificate applicants. The process delivers results of the fingerprint analysis in two weeks.[35]

The selected technology should ensure that *fingerprints are captured electronically by a digital fingerprint scanner and by a trained technician; fingerprints captured via [this process] allow for a much faster and more accurate fingerprint collection process. Prints can be transmitted electronically to drastically reduce processing time, as well as provide a much higher quality of print collection to significantly reduce rejections, or fingerprints that cannot be 'read' by the FBI's automated fingerprint information system*.[36]

---

[35] New Mexico Department of Education (2016). *Fingerprint for Licensure.* Retrieved from http://ped.state.nm.us/ped/LicFingerprinting.html

[36] FieldPrint (2016). Frequently Asked Questions. Retrieved from http://www.fieldprintfbi.com/FBISubPage_FullWidth.aspx?ChannelID=272

Since a system of fingerprinting based upon scans is within the purview of the DPS, that department should consider bearing the cost of this update to the background checks system for all state agencies with employment-related fingerprinting requirements. However, if this is not the responsibility of the DPS, and it is necessary for DEED to pay for this enhancement, the state can apply a portion of the savings that are projected to result from **Recommendations 7.1.1, 7.1.2, and 7.1.3** to consolidate the work of the Professional Teaching Practices Commission into the work of the Office of Teacher Certification.

Recommendation 3.4.3

Revise the requirements outlined in Alaska Statute 14.20.015(b) for teacher applicants to pass basic competency examinations for certification so that unnecessary testing is avoided. (Tier 1)

The state has an obvious and well-justified interest in ensuring that teachers possess essential core academic competencies. However, in the interest of efficient recruitment of out-of-state teachers, the Legislature and State Board should implement other mechanisms by which experienced teachers can meet the basic competency requirement. Examples of such alternatives found in research include:

- Certification from other states;
- Scores from other exams already taken; e.g., Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), the ACT (originally known as the American College Test), or the Graduate Record Exam (GRE);
- A prescribed number of years of successful practice; and/or
- Completion of a master's degree or higher in the teacher's area of certification at an accredited college or university.

The Office of Legislative Research in the state of Connecticut compiled information across eleven states. The analysis examined alternatives, exemptions

and scoring flexibility. Examples of the conditions under which states waive the basic skills testing requirement are profiled in the report.[37]

DEED already has a waiver process for a select group of states. Other than minor additional paperwork and review time for certificate applications, this recommendation should not produce extra costs.

3.5 STATE SYSTEM OF SUPPORT AND BASE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Findings

The State System of Support does not provide adequate services and resources to assist struggling schools.

State accountability systems for schools are useful in disclosing to parents, students, educators, policymakers and the community-at-large the status of their schools relative to student performance. However, grading schools is just one step in a state's obligation; states must provide support for struggling schools.[38] Such support should go beyond providing a rating and prescribing an improvement planning process. States are obligated to provide resources that can improve instruction and performance in struggling schools.[39] This is especially important because there is typically a strong correlation between state accountability ratings and student poverty.[40] DEED has committed to provide a tiered system of support, differentiated to meet the needs of specific schools and districts.[41]

---

[37] Lohman, J. (2010). Teacher Competency Tests in Selected States: Alternatives, Exemptions and Scoring Flexibility. Hartford, CT: Office of Legislative Research. Retrieved from https://www.cga.ct.gov/2010/rpt/2010-R-0420.htm

[38] U.S. Department of Education. Laws & Guidance/Elementary & Secondary Education: ESEA Flexibility. Retrieved from: http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/esea-flexibility/index.htm

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ehrenhalt, A. (2013). School Scandals Reveal the Problem with Grading Schools. *Governing.* Retrieved from http://www.governing.com/columns/col-school-scandals-reveal-testing-ignorance.html

[41] *Alaska ESEA Flexibility Request for Window 3: Renewal Request, Rev. 07/02/2015.* Washington, DC: U.S. Dept. of Education.

DEED's ratings for schools range from one (lowest) to five (highest) stars. The most intensive levels of support are prescribed for schools that, by virtue of low levels of student performance, are rated as Priority and Focus schools.

The need for state support in struggling schools is readily apparent. In interviews, State Board members acknowledge that improvements are needed to ensure a high quality education for all students. Significant gaps in achievement exist among the subgroups of students. These gaps are evident in state assessment scores and on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). "Alaska's two largest racial/ethnic groups are white students (about 50 percent) and American Indian/Alaska Native students (about 25 percent). There are achievement level gaps between white students and all other racial/ethnic groups, but the largest gaps are between white students and American Indian/Alaska Native students."[42] One interviewee, citing the Moore v. Alaska case,[43] stated, *DEED especially needs to zero in on Alaska Native students. They need to respond to their plight…that's the point of the Moore case. They haven't figured this part out very well. Alaskan Native boys perform the lowest in the country on NAEP. The biggest issue for these students is acquisition of literacy*. The plight of these students is evident in the subgroup analysis of scores. American Indian/Alaska Native students consistently trail other subgroups on NAEP.[44]

State Board members and DEED leaders and staff acknowledge DEED's responsibility to intervene in low-performing districts. Further, the obligations of the state to support struggling schools are made clear in law. Alaska Statute 14.03.123, School and District Accountability spells out support obligations and also requires that the state meet its federal obligations of support. In addition, the Moore v. Alaska lawsuit settlement clarifies the nature of assistance

---

[42] *Alaska Results on the 2015 National Assessment of Educational Progress.* Juneau, AK: Department of Education and Early Development. Retrieved from https://education.alaska.gov/tls/Assessments/naep/AK_2015_NAEPSummaryofResults.pdf

[43] The trial court in Moore v. State ruled on June 21, 2007 that "the State has violated the Education Clause" because it "has failed to identify those schools that are not according to children a meaningful opportunity" and has failed to provide "a concerted effort to remedy that situation." The case was settled in 2012 when the state agreed to invest significant funding to improve low-performing districts.

[44] NAEP State Profiles: Alaska. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/states/Default.aspx?st=ak

to which the state has committed.[45] DEED acknowledges that its support systems for struggling districts and schools should include, among other things:

- Facilitation of professional learning communities;
- Modeling leadership practices;
- Modeling instruction and co-teaching lessons in classrooms;
- Delivering professional learning;
- Observing in classrooms and providing feedback.

Support coaches are expected to shoulder much of the responsibility for delivery of these services.

The system of support for low-performing schools and the delivery of services such as those outlined above are inadequate according to superintendents and district leaders. In the November 2015 survey, only ten percent of DEED staff and eight percent of superintendents ranked the state system of support as an area of service in which DEED excels. Instructional support was selected by many respondents as needing improvement (28 percent of DEED staff and 36 percent of superintendents), but also as something useful to districts; only three percent of DEED staff and six percent of superintendents indicated that it was not of value. A low proportion of superintendents (23-35 percent) agreed that DEED's school effectiveness programs ensure quality standards-based instruction, help improve academic achievement for all students, and increase graduation rates.

Survey and interview comments from superintendents, district staff, and leaders from other education organizations revealed similar concerns. The following comments are instructive:

- Three organizational leaders expressed concern about the inefficiency of the onsite model of service delivery:
    - *The coaching model needs a fresh approach. To fly all over the state isn't fiscally sustainable.*

[45] Moore v. Alaska Settlement Agreement (2012). Case No. 3 AN-04-9756 CI. Anchorage, AK: Superior Court for the State of Alaska, Third Judicial District.

Coaches can't "fly in, fly out" as often with the budget like it is. The "fly in, fly out" program of consultation with struggling schools/districts is not effective. It hasn't worked in the past…

- *Would like to see DEED better positioned to help remote areas.*

- *There has been nothing done that has improved the effectiveness of districts and the schools in recent memory. AK STEPP is always pointed to as a success, but it's a long list of objectives that sits in a computer. Nothing tangible is ever offered.*

- *DEED does not have much of a grasp of how to fix broken schools. Sending DEED out to fix a school hasn't worked. Increases turnover. Takes experience with rural schools, and they typically don't have it.*

- One respondent praised the coaches *Coaches for schools have been very helpful, but then expressed concern about the inadequate number of coaches and the need for a team-based approach to coaching: They need more of them. They changed from teams to individuals because of diminished funding and support…and it shows.*

State Board members and DEED staff likewise expressed concern about the delivery of support services to struggling schools. While DEED staff rated the system more favorably in the survey than did superintendents, their comments are instructive:

- *If we followed NCLB to the letter, we should have been intervening in a lot more schools than we did. But there are not enough resources.*

- *SSOS now has 12 coaches providing a week (four days) per month onsite providing guidance in struggling schools. There are one hundred one- and two-star schools. Fifteen have a coach… We need to extend our reach beyond 15 schools!*

- *We cut contract coaches so fewer schools are served. Fewer districts getting service and service to them is more limited. Travel restrictions further limit service to them.*

- *We need to train the coaches better. If the department doesn't have to be alone in doing this, we can figure this out.*

- *There's little interface between DEED academic content specialists and SSOS coaches. The coaches are knowledgeable, but their knowledge may be out of date. Teaming with the coaches would be useful.*

Finally, there is little data-supported evidence regarding the impact of the State System of Support. One superintendent said that the district's coach had helped two schools in corrective action. *They are no longer in corrective action, but are still on support*. A DEED staff member noted that there were five districts in a district-wide program of intervention five years ago; now there are only two. This staff member further noted that coaches provide reports about the progress that they believe is being achieved. The DEED staff member summed up this way: *The information is largely anecdotal... I am convinced of their impact, and can narrate it.* But there's little data available to objectively analyze the overall impact of the State System of Support.

The recommendations that follow are designed to aid in improving services to struggling schools. DEED and the state legislature should undertake serious reform of the State System of Support to increase the system's impact. This should occur because it's the right thing to do; too many students are being inadequately served in too many low-performing and marginal schools. According to a DEED administrator, there are approximately 100 schools rated only one or two stars.

A secondary, but also important, reason to consider the following recommendations is to avoid costly legal challenges with uncertain outcomes. As one state leader asserted, *The responses to the Moore case weren't prescribed in the statutes that address this. But even so, some of these dynamics seem likely to get us back into court over the same issues that generated the suit in the first place.*

Recommendation 3.5.1

Revamp the coaching model for struggling schools to provide a team-based, integrated program of support and educator development to struggling schools and add emerging technologies for delivery of these services. (Tier 1)

The current program of support touches too few struggling schools. Each school that receives coaching support is dependent upon the skill set of the particular coach assigned to it and the resources that this coach can marshal. As one DEED staff member noted, *These are highly skilled coaches, school leadership, community dynamics, reading approaches. But it's insufficient. We're not going to get more personnel, so we need to use those we have better*.

Using existing resources, coaching positions should be used in a manner that ensures a team with the core leadership and academic content expertise necessary to help struggling schools improve. This would expand the reach, impact, and skills of the DEED academic content specialists, who are only two in number at this point. The DEED academic content specialists should be engaged in ensuring the alignment of support to the state's academic standards and supporting the coaches in the development and renewal of their skills and the delivery of services to the schools. These specialists should further coordinate and ensure alignment of effort with partner organizations that have the capacity and willingness to deliver high-quality professional development. Coaches can expand their reach and impact through professional development for district level personnel who can in turn coach and support colleagues.

DEED should expand delivery of content via the internet and reduce travel time and onsite service delivery by coaches. An examination of the current resources on the DEED website indicates that these resources are not adequate for a revamped service delivery model. While many webinars are archived, there are many links cited as resources that simply describe a location and date—and in many instances there's little in the title to indicate what the content is about, or provide clues about its specific utility. Very limited video resources were found on the website to support the current SSOS.

Coaching and modeling are powerful ways to support professional learning. Both synchronous and asynchronous interactive models can facilitate this. Virtual presence robots, such as the ones used in the Kodiak Island Borough School District, employ small, motorized stands with a tablet device for real-time video interaction among educators and between educators and students. Asynchronous strategies are also useful. Video footage of model teaching segments across multiple disciplines can be obtained or recorded and delivered online to schools and districts. DEED leaders have noted services such as the

Teacher Channel and the School Improvement Network as potential sources of instructional support content.

Just as it is possible to model instruction via resources provided by DEED coaches, it is possible for leaders and teachers in struggling schools to upload video recordings of their practice to obtain remote review by and feedback from coaches.

DEED does not have to generate all of the educator development services to a struggling school on its own. Conversations with leaders across multiple organizations indicated a willingness on the part of these organizations to collaborate with DEED in the expansion of educator development resources.

Some geographical locations have limited bandwidth. See **Recommendation 6.3.1** for further discussion of improving bandwidth statewide. One such strategy is uploading and caching resources during low-use hours.

Exemplars of practices to support an effective delivery of a statewide system of support include:

Framework for Support: The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) describes effective roles for state education agencies in the delivery of school improvement services.[46]

1. Broaden accountability indicators beyond minimum academic standards to include increasing annually the percentages of students who graduate prepared for college, advanced training or careers.

2. Develop a system of incentives for the recognition and reward of schools that show significant improvement in meeting new accountability indicators such as increasing the percentage of students leaving grade eight ready for high school, reducing the failure rates in grades nine and 10, and increasing the percentages of students who are on track at the end of Grades 9 and 10 to meet college and career readiness standards by the end of high school.

---

[46] Southern Regional Education Board. *The Three Essentials: Improving Schools Requires District Vision, District and State Support, and Principal Leadership.*

3. Pursue policies that recognize a broader definition of academic rigor by: joining a college preparatory academic core with quality career/technical studies; approving and funding career/technical programs only if they have embedded academic content and intellectually demanding assignments; providing alternatives through which students can demonstrate preparedness for further study, advanced training or employment, including completion of special projects; and creating incentives for high schools to join with other entities to provide relevant and intellectually challenging learning experiences for students.

4. Offer a vision of best practices — based on research and a wide range of evidence — that will improve low-performing high schools if implemented properly. These include making discipline-focused literacy and literacy training the centerpiece for all classrooms and providing 15 to 20 days of professional development for all faculty over the course of three years, targeting specific school and classroom practices and tailored to particular problems confronting the school.

5. Ensure that principals have autonomy to select their faculty, discretion to allocate resources for the improvement of their school, and authority to select professional development that is aligned with their school improvement plans.

6. Ensure that every district has a comprehensive vision, strategic plan and system to help principals lead their schools and to hold schools accountable for achieving results. Assist every district in working with its community to shape a bold vision for improving schools. States can provide external facilitators and consultants to work with districts in developing their district plan and involving the community and others in that process. States also can assist districts in performing operational efficiency reviews and offer ideas for redirecting resources to better support a school improvement framework.

Where capacity for these activities is particularly low, SREB further recommends that the state education agency aid schools by:

- Providing outside facilitation to support districts in establishing a shared vision and goals for student performance;

- Providing outside facilitation to assist districts to restructure the role of principals to enable them to devote more time to improving instruction;

- Creating a database of exemplarily practices and strategies to help educators with improved student performance strategies;

- Developing a student survey and collect data about student perception of teaching and learning in their schools; and

- Assisting districts to conduct "waste audits" in low performing schools in order to better direct resources to measures that will improve school results.

Video documentation of practice, related review, and feedback: The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards video review and feedback process provides useful exemplars of these processes across multiple content areas.

State case studies of effective strategies for support team members. Krasnoff: B., Davis, D. (2011). *Optimizing Support to Low-Performing Schools through School Support Teams.* Education Northwest. Retrieved from: http://educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/resources/Lessons-Learned-Support-Teams-v2-i1.pdf

Effective coaching models: McKenna, M. & Walpole, S. *Models of Coaching.* Retrieved from: http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=0ahUKEwi95p_PyZHLAhXI7iYKHfSTCBEQFggpMAE&url=http%3A%2F%2Fcurry.virginia.edu%2Freading-projects%2Fprojects%2Fgarf%2FPowerPoints%2FModels%2520of%2520Coaching%2520with%2520Hybrids.ppt&usg=AFQjCNGJWRScdvb8IxliqidC7G15srAfjw&sig2=vPkiywOIdbWzTbCHQmowFg.

Coaching via virtual presence robots: The case study of the Kodiak Island School District's use of this process provides a very relevant model. Retrieved from: http://www.repeatvids.com/video/?id=t59GM5sTYKI.

Implementation of this recommendation will likely incur modest additional costs, but also could result in some significant savings. Reduction of the "fly in, fly out"

onsite services should save funds that can be redeployed to support the enhanced technology and procurement of video and other resources. The recently enacted reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), known as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) will provide additional Title I funding, a portion of which can help to support the system of support. Similar expansion of Title IV funds can assist with expanded technology costs.[47] Title II federal funds should be repurposed in some instances to support this work. The support resources and professional development resources that are added to support teachers in struggling schools will also be of value to teachers in other schools. Taking advantage of the willingness and resources of partner organizations should expand DEED's impact with little additional cost. Finally, such a level of collaboration could prove to be an effective springboard for grant procurement to support some of the costs, particularly one-time costs such as the virtual presence robots.

Recommendation 3.5.2

Coordinate the development of, and provide support for, a base curriculum with aligned instructional resources across a select set of academic contents. (Tier 1)

Alaska has a strong foundation for a base curriculum. The State Board and DEED have guided the development of standards across the academic contents and the standards have been updated over the past few years in several of the academic contents. Acceptance of and willingness to implement the standards was mentioned routinely in interviews. *They've led well and been proactive on new standards*, said one of the leaders of a collaborating organization. In the November 2015 survey, 55 percent of superintendents agreed that *the State Board of Education and Early Development provides the department with substantive direction and guidance for ensuring quality standards-based instruction to improve academic achievement for all students.* Only 17 percent of superintendents disagreed.

The State Board and DEED should now lead a process of designing base curriculum and supporting resources and making them available to districts that

[47] Burke, L. (2016). *The Every Student Succeeds Act: More Programs and Federal Intervention in Pre-K and K–12 Education.* The Heritage Foundation. Retrieved from http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2015/12/the-every-student-succeeds-act-more-programs-and-federal-intervention-in-pre-k-and-k12-education.

voluntarily choose to adopt them. These curricula and resources should be aligned to the Alaska Standards. Support for such measures was voiced in organizations with which DEED collaborates, and in interviews with DEED staff leaders and staff members. A sample of these comments is provided below:

- *It's time for a standardized curriculum. Start with ELA, math, science.*

- *There's a belief in local control, but there's a hunger for [a standard curriculum]. Making it voluntary would let those who want to go their own way do so.*

- *I believe there is both great need and desire for such support from DEED at the local level. Most of the requests for assistance are for professional development support, support with curriculum and materials selection, and so on.*

- *I have promoted commonality of content as a district leader. Small districts don't have specialized skill sets around curriculum, instruction and decisions about related resources. They don't have time to partner with others—to combine resources to hire a curriculum director, for example. So, they look to DEED.*

- *Many superintendents would like a uniform statewide curriculum. A few don't want this, so maybe it could be optional. In the area of curriculum and testing, small districts desperately need guidance on curriculum, in spite of statutory constraints on state weighing in on curriculum and the history of local control. "They don't have a curriculum…the textbook is their curriculum. But the textbook may not be aligned. Superintendents complain that the state doesn't help enough with these issues. Districts have limited resources for these kinds of activities. Given limited resources, the state might focus on smaller and poorer districts.*

- *Small districts don't have capacities to support implementation of the higher standards. Benefits of doing this: allows for districts that don't have capacity to use the model. Otherwise texts, test materials are the default curriculum. Larger districts have said they'd make their resources available free of charge.*

Support for such measures was also voiced in a number of interviewees in school districts:

- *My impression is that superintendents would be enthusiastic.*
- *Absolutely – I am an advocate. This would help them not re-invent the wheel. Some teachers and administrators will resist.*
- *This would add value. If DEED could provide… it would provide a strong foundation for districts. It's almost essential for small rural districts.*
- *This would be useful for smaller, outlying communities. But to implement this is pretty time intensive. We would need to provide a lot of PD. We've had some efforts undertaken by groups of districts to align curriculum and distance learning, and there's potential there. A common curriculum would be a benefit. But participation would need to be voluntary.*
- *There's a need for streamlining the standards (15 or 16 per grade level should do it) and providing more support from the state level. Focus on the central contents. Would make it easier to align from instruction to assessment. More funds and energy.*
- *We like this idea. We've looked at some other states, including Texas to get a sense of how we might do this.*
- *The state should have some minimal expectations: curriculum, assessment, teacher credentialing. There will be some competing philosophies; so if the state brings together districts to talk it through, it would be better accepted. But if the state requires it, the state should pay for it.*

One of the superintendents who spoke supportively of a voluntary base curriculum said, *Some teachers and administrators will resist.* Another supporter said, *It will be a long time before DEED can get the people and the capacity before anyone will trust them to manage something like this. Knowing it originated with DEED would kill it right off the bat. It'll take a long time to build this credibility.*

There were indeed some skeptics among the superintendents who were interviewed. Their reflections are below:

- *Districts are so different, how does a curriculum that is useful in Anchorage work for one like ours? One-size-fits all is not likely to work well. My district didn't align curriculum to Common Core. I have seen too many innovations come and go… DEED doesn't have the expertise to implement such things.*

- *I would be very skeptical of that kind of an effort. The needs of Fairbanks and Anchorage are very different than the issues we deal with here. It might be useful in some places, but one curriculum would not be able to meet all the needs of different kinds of districts*.

Many of the proponents of a voluntary base curriculum noted that DEED could and should work with partners in the development and implementation of such materials. Multiple organization representatives voiced support for and willingness to collaborate on such an initiative. Such an undertaking would require internal collaboration as well; all parts of the department would need to pitch in on this. A task force composed of experts and representatives of key organizations and stakeholder groups should guide this process.

Some interviewees noted that current statutes would impede the implementation of a voluntary base curriculum. DEED protocols for interacting with a district are sometimes a hindrance. For example, DEED staff are sometimes restricted in calling a superintendent. They are not able to work with district professional development coordinators in a group. When asked why such practices were in place, one interviewee said, *there's a lot of concern about the state weighing in on curricular matters*.

Statutory, regulatory, and policy revisions that enable DEED leaders and staff members to engage in planning for and implementing a voluntary base curriculum should be enacted.

Costs for implementing a voluntary base curriculum should not be prohibitive and the implementation of such a curriculum should ultimately produce savings for the state of Alaska. This would assist the smaller districts, for which the costs of curriculum development can be burdensome, while also allowing them to add

any local variations or make modifications to best meet their students' and communities' needs.

The review team acknowledges that the legislature recently reduced funding to the State System of Support, which resulted in the elimination of content specialists, who could otherwise have been instrumental in implementing this recommendation. The review team maintains that this recommendation has the potential to produce significant long–term savings for the state on materials, texts, and other instructional resources. DEED should address this recommendation and its potential for achieving savings with the legislature, with the aim of negotiating the resources necessary to implement the recommendation. Coordination with other organizations to further reduce costs to DEED and to secure additional expertise and support is warranted. Texas has adopted an approach through which the state provides resources to schools to support curriculum implementation. Representatives of Texas have met with organizations in Alaska with whom DEED can partner to develop, implement, and support a voluntary base curriculum.

A voluntary base curriculum aligned to the Alaska Standards, would be supported by aligned materials, texts, and resources. Partnering with other organizations and interested districts to identify such resources, the state can then set up "clearinghouse" processes to identify a choice of pre-vetted vendors whose products and services are well aligned to the curriculum. Collaborative purchasing or a vetted state contract list should secure more competitive pricing for curriculum materials and resources.

3.6 TOPIC: STATUTORY REQUIREMENT FOR MINIMUM INSTRUCTIONAL SPENDING

Findings

Alaska's statutory mandate requiring local districts spend at least 70 percent of their operating costs on instruction is restrictive and overly burdensome for many small districts.

In 1998, the Alaska Legislature enacted a statute – commonly referred to as the "70-30 Rule" – requiring that local districts spend at least 70 percent of their

operating funds on instruction.[48] When implemented, this requirement was intended to promote classroom spending in order to bolster student achievement.

Small districts have struggled each year to meet the 70 percent threshold given the large percentage of their small total budgets required for basic operating costs such as energy and insurance. Small districts do not benefit from economies of scale in the manner that larger districts do. DEED has identified two commonalities in districts struggling to meet the 70 percent requirement: (1) school districts that have an annual operating budget of less than $3 million; and (2) districts that spend more than 20 percent of their budget on operations and maintenance.[49]

During interviews conducted for this review, local school officials repeatedly noted *local budget control* and *elimination of the '70-30' statutory mandate* as one of their highest priorities. Local budget control was also highlighted in a stakeholder surveys conducted for DEED in July and August 2015, where "budget development" was noted as the top priority for superintendents and board members in maintaining local control of schools, and with 63.3 percent of superintendents and 65.3 percent of board members citing budget control as a decision best made by local districts and communities.[50] Similarly, the State Board has placed high priority on local decision-making, with *empowering local control of educational decisions" as one of three strategic priorities enumerated in the Board's recent strategic plan development.*[51] In surveys conducted for this review, both DEED staff members and local superintendents were asked whether DEED's oversight and management of school funding responsibilities helped to improve academic achievement for students. While 42 percent of DEED staff members saw a connection between funding oversight and student achievement, only 28 percent of superintendents agreed.

---

[48] Alaska Statute 14.17.520.
[49] State Board of Education - Board Packet (memorandum from Commissioner Hanley to Members of the State Board of Education & Early Development), December 9, 2015, page 5.
[50] OnStrategy, "Alaska State Board of Education and The Department of Early Childhood Development and Early Development," September 2015, pages 4-5.
[51] Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development, "Strategic Plan Progress as of December, 2015," December 2015, page 1.

Currently, districts that do not meet the 70 percent instructional spending requirement must be granted a waiver by the State Board of Education. In recent years, approximately 20 to 25 districts have applied for waivers each year.[52] According to interviews, the waiver process is onerous for many local districts and creates a significant amount of additional work for DEED staff to prepare for the State Board's waiver review and action. Comments from superintendents are instructive. One superintendent said of the 70-30 rule, *We pretty much ignore it. I've never heard of anyone being denied a waiver*. Another said, *We're not paying attention to it anyway. You can get a waiver. Some districts will never meet it*.

In December 2015, the State Board passed Resolution 03-2015 calling for the legislature to repeal the requirements of the "70-30 rule" noting that other systems of accountability more directly tied to student achievement are in place.

Recommendation 3.6.1

Repeal AS 14.17.520 requiring school districts to spend at least 70 percent of their operating funds on instruction. (Tier 1)

Given the current limitations of the state budget and state education funding, additional budgeting flexibility could be a beneficial (no-cost) planning tool to afford local districts.

If the legislature is not willing to remove the instructional spending threshold entirely, it should consider reducing the required percentage. According to DEED, if the minimum expenditure for instruction were lowered to just 60 percent, only one to five districts would need to request waivers each year.[53]

State accountability systems and school improvement measures in low-performing schools are a better mechanism for ensuring district focus on instruction, particularly in circumstances where the state provides useful support to struggling schools. District interviewees view the star rating system as a viable

[52] State Board of Education - Board Packet (memorandum from Commissioner Hanley to Members of the State Board of Education & Early Development), December 9, 2015, page 5.
[53] State Board of Education - Board Packet (memorandum from Commissioner Hanley to Members of the State Board of Education & Early Development), December 9, 2015, page 5.

and effective means of measuring school performance and asserting pressures for improvement of student achievement.

DEED currently requires Title I schools and schools with a star rating of less than "4" to prepare, submit, and implement a school improvement plan. While it is recommended that all schools complete school improvement plans, at the very least, DEED should extend the requirement to schools in districts that spend less than 70 percent of their operating budget on instructional purposes.

The review team recommends that DEED place more emphasis on strengthening its statewide system of support to struggling schools. By doing so, the state will create a stronger accountability system to ensure districts are adequately spending the appropriate amounts for instructional purposes. (See **Recommendation 3.5.1** in the previous section for recommendations related to strengthening support for struggling schools.)

When reviewing educational funding nationwide, Alaska's percentage of instructional spending (55.6 percent of total spending) is slightly below the national average (58.3 percent), and that of comparable states (58-60 percent). However, given the costly nature of providing local education in Alaska, higher operational (non-instructional) costs are to be expected. **Exhibit 3-2** below shows Alaska's instructional spending as a percentage of total spending, along with data from peer states.

EXHIBIT 3-2
PERCENTAGE OF INSTRUCTIONAL SPENDING
ALASKA AND PEER STATES

	Alaska	New Mexico	Montana	North Dakota	South Dakota	Average
Percentage of Total Education Spending on Instruction	**55.6%**	58%	59.8%	59.4%	59.3%	58.34%

Source: Ballotpedia, 2013 data and Governing.com, 2013 data.

It should be noted that a study of Alaska's school funding program conducted for the legislature by Augenblick, Palaich and Associates (APA) in 2015 noted

that while a positive correlation exists between instructional expenditures and district proficiency levels, other areas of expenditure should not be ignored.[54]

No additional funding will be required to repeal Alaska Statute 14.17.520 as recommended.

Significant savings in terms of staff time are likely to be achieved for local districts, DEED staff, and State Board members if time-consuming waiver requests are eliminated or substantially reduced.

3.7 ALASKA SAFE CHILDREN'S ACT IMPLEMENTATION

Findings

DEED has been tasked with significant new responsibilities in recent months in order to fulfill its obligations in compliance with the Alaska Safe Children's Act (HB 44), signed into law September 10, 2015. The new legislation amended AS 14.30 by adding two new sections, AS 14.30.355 that requires school boards to adopt and implement a policy that mandates a training program for employees and students (K-12) related to sexual abuse and sexual assault awareness and prevention, and AS 14.30.356 that requires school boards to adopt and implement dating violence and abuse policy, training, awareness, prevention, and notices.

No new funding has been appropriated to DEED for the implementation of this legislation, as the costs were determined to reside with the school districts.[55] DEED staff have proactively and successfully pursued federal and outside grants in order to perform the health and safety advisory functions required of department, including those new roles under HB 44 designed to prevent sexual abuse. New requirements faced by DEED under the law (which incorporates several pieces of legislation including those commonly known as Erin's Law and Bree's Law) include:

[54] Augenblick, Palaich and Associates, "Review of Alaska's School Funding Program," (Prepared for the Alaska State Legislature), July 2015, pages xi-xii.
[55] http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_documents.asp?session=29&docid=8594 (p.2)

- Ensuring that elementary and secondary students statewide learn personal body safety information that enables them to identify, resist, and safely report sexual assault and abuse;

- Ensuring that teen dating violence identification and prevention is taught to middle and secondary school students;

- Ensuring that certified school staff statewide are trained in sexual abuse and assault identification, and reporting; suicide prevention, and substance abuse issues; and

- Providing technical assistance to school districts and schools in fulfilling the requirements of the Act.

In particular, DEED has leveraged its existing interdepartmental e-learning system to enable school districts statewide to provide over 50 professional development training courses and modules to educators and school staff related to identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, and sexual abuse – among the many other required areas of training, including child nutrition, substance abuse, and blood-borne pathogens.

Districts currently have the opportunity to use the e-learning system for free; this has dramatically reduced additional need for costly "fly-in" expert trainers, and lost time and resources due to weather-related training cancelations. Teachers are also able to use this system to simultaneously meet statutory certification and new recertification requirements, offsetting hundreds of thousands of dollars in additional training costs. DEED staff have also met with school counselors to coordinate series of required data in order to prevent duplication of effort.

DEED is represented on an interim task force established by law to oversee implementation of the new mandates, including providing recommendations for age-appropriate curricula, and effective training materials related to sexual abuse and prevention, dating violence, suicide prevention, and substance abuse issues. In order to provide sound, evidence-based recommendations to districts in keeping with their statutory role, DEED has worked in close partnership with the Network on Domestic Violence, the Council on Domestic Violence, the Suicide Prevention Council, and Mental Health Board, among other interested

and expert organizations to identify curricula that have been evaluated as effective.

Commendation 3.B

DEED is commended for making rapid strides in successfully implementing the programs and standards to fulfill its statutory training and reporting requirements under the Alaska Safe Children's Act (HB 44), and for employing innovative methods to do so in a highly economical way.

4 OBJECTIVES 5 AND 6: AREAS OF OVERLAP AND INTERAGENCY COOPERATION

Objective 5: Identify any areas in which agency programs and jurisdictions overlap, and assess the quality of interagency cooperation in those areas.

Objective 6: Identify services provided by programs and functions duplicated by another government agency or private entity and recommend the most effective and efficient way to perform those services.

For the purpose of this review, the review team has combined the findings and recommendations for Objectives 5 and 6 because they are similar in nature and findings for these objectives are interconnected. These findings and recommendations should also be considered in conjunction with those under Objective 9 related to identifying agencies that could be terminated or consolidated, cost reductions, and potential program or cost reductions based on policy changes.

Overview and Summary of the Conclusion for Objectives 5 and 6

Analysis of DEED's partnerships finds the agency has been partially successful in furthering its mission through effective interagency cooperation and high-quality partnerships. The level of partnership development is strong in some instances, and weak in others.

The findings and recommendations provided in this report reflect the opportunity to improve partnerships that are apparently either poorly managed or are non-substantive (i.e. exist on paper only). At the same time, DEED is to be commended for a number of highly effective partnerships. Building on what works and making improvements in challenging areas will be critical to the future success of DEED and its many partners.

The need for stronger communication processes with DEED partners – and especially with school personnel and organizations – is noteworthy. The need for stronger communication lines between DEED personnel and the State Board of Education is also addressed under Objective 1. Communications processes generally should be prioritized for significant improvement as the organization transitions under a new commissioner.

DEED's partnerships with the University of Alaska and the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program (ANSEP) could also be strengthened through improved communications, and specifically a clarification of terms. DEED and ANSEP leadership have conflicting views of their current partnership. ANSEP personnel have expectations of DEED as a program partner, while DEED reports its role is as a fiscal agent only. This lack of mutual understanding and clarity highlights the potential for dissatisfaction and the need for stronger communication with partners.

At the same time, DEED's partnerships with a number of government agencies, service providers and interest groups are highly effective. By building on what works well and improving what is not working, DEED can become more effective and efficient in carrying out the mission of the organization through strategic partnerships.

An important limitation in evaluating many of DEED's partnerships is the lack of quantifiable data to assess their effectiveness; several so-called partnerships are in effect simply funding streams, and it is left to the beneficiary partner to document success, or lack thereof.

Two important factors limit DEED's efforts in data collection analysis with respect to these partnerships. First, is the amount of time required to collect data. However, reasonable efforts to assess the quality and results of the partnership are to be expected as part of the investment in a partnership. Second, and perhaps more salient, is the perception that the legislature views all data collection as a sensitive undertaking, and that requesting data from other government agencies has been discouraged as "overreach." Legislative direction is needed to set the parameters and to clarify appropriate data collection opportunities that will better enable DEED to demonstrate the quality and effectiveness of its partnerships, and to better make data-driven decisions about those resource investments with the best return.

Public Works identified only one key area of overlap/duplication of effort: the management of educator licensing responsibilities between the Professional Teaching Practices Commission (PTPC) and DEED's Teacher Certification Office. The PTPC also duplicates some services of the University of Alaska's teacher education programs, such as providing professional ethics training to candidates for graduation from these programs. These duplications of effort generate

unnecessary costs to DEED in personnel time, travel, and facilities expenses. Since the review team recommends consolidation of these duplicative or overlapping functions, this finding is addressed in further detail under Objective 9 (see **Chapter 7 Consolidation or Reductions**).

4.1 DEED COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Findings

DEED has and maintains numerous successful partnerships. One of DEED's core services relates to active partnerships and to "provide opportunities for, and collaborate with government entities, and other public and private organizations to engage in Active Partnerships in pursuit of state educational goals."

According to DEED, the comprehensive list of active partnerships includes:

- Library Operations, Archives, Museum Operations, Online With Libraries and Live Homework Help (LAM) – To provide access to government information; to collect, organize, preserve, and make available materials that document the history of the state; and to promote the development of libraries, archives and museums statewide.

- Alaska State Council on the Arts (ASCA) – Fosters the development of the arts for all Alaskans through education, partnerships, grants and services.

- Professional Teaching Practices Commission (PTPC) – To serve as a preventative and positive force in working to enhance the professional performance of all educators; and, to ensure that members of the teaching profession in Alaska are qualified and ethical educators.

- Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE), Loan Servicing and to promote access to and success in education and career training beyond high school and to increase Alaska's workforce by providing public medical education to Alaskans and by providing residency training for medical school graduates.

- Teaching and Learning Support (TLS); specifically, Alaska Resource Education Grant (formerly AMEREF), Technical Vocation Education Program (TVEP), Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program (ANSEP),

STEM Pilot Project, Best Beginnings, Parents as Teachers. To provide resources to school districts to ensure that special populations of students meet the state's high academic standards, to improve performance through professional development, school accountability, standards, and assessments, and to provide school districts and stakeholders with high quality information to aid in data driven decision-making processes and reporting.

- Mt. Edgecumbe High School (MEHS) – To provide a residential high school for Alaskan students.

- State Facilities Maintenance – To account and budget for the maintenance and repair, and renewal and replacement of state-owned education facilities at Mt. Edgecumbe High School.

One DEED partnership not listed on DEED's key partnership list is with the Alaska Autism Resource Center (AARC). The AARC provides statewide system change through education consultation, and support to families, community members, agency personnel, educators, community mental health providers, direct service workers, workers in the private sector, and individuals who experience an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The Special Education Service Agency (SESA), through a grant award with Department of Education & Early Development, manages the AARC. The AARC partnership has established six specific performance measures to ensure the program is meeting its intended goals. For example:

> Performance Measure #5: The AARC will work with at least two Alaskan school districts to create a professional development plan for their team in order to build capacity in the community. The professional development plan will be based on the Autism Program Environmental Rating Scale (APERS) assessment and/or self-assessment. Intensive training will be provided in three, two-day sessions where participants will be taught to use evidence-based practice in the areas.
>
> Performance Measure #5 Outcome: The AARC conducted training with Nome City Schools and Bering Strait School District to satisfy this performance measure. A 500 level credit was available to training attendees through the University of Fairbanks for those who were

interested. An average of 31 school district personnel attended the training.

With grant funding from the U.S. Department of Education, Parents as Teachers (PAT) examines the effectiveness of its collaborative model. The AARC and PAT partnerships are two excellent examples of how active and true partnerships should function effectively, yet AARC is not listed as a key DEED partner.

ANSEP is listed as a key partner for DEED; however, DEED states that it does not have any role with ANSEP other than as a fiscal agent and the reporting of the program's success is the responsibility of University of Alaska.

The same is true of the Alaska Mineral and Energy Resource Education Fund (AMEREF, also known as the Alaska Resource Education Grant). DEED states, *This is a 100 percent pass-through grant to AMEREF. The only relationship DEED has with AMEREF is as a fiscal agent and DEED does not track the success of AMEREF.*

MEHS is listed as a key DEED partner even though the school is state run and staffed (by DEED). When key administrators at MEHS were asked how they measure success, the response was that they *look at how well we are doing on our strategic plan.* However, the review team examined the MEHS Strategic Plan dated October 9, 2012 and noted that the plan does not have any specific performance measures; nor could the staff produce a document that determines success based on its strategic plan. At the time of the review team's onsite visit to MEHS, nothing could be produced that showed that an updated strategic plan was being developed or initiated.

DEED effectively collaborates with a number of agencies and public and/or private entities. Among the partnerships to be commended are the following:

- DEED's partnership with the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (Career and Technical Education)

- Deed's partnership with the Alaska Department of Health and Human Services-Early Childhood Coordinating Council (Head Start, Parents as Teachers, Best Beginnings)

- Support and funding in collaboration with the Alaska Council of School Administrators-Staff Development Network (professional development and technical services)

- Alaska Superintendents' Association (ASA)

- Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA)

- Alaska Association of Elementary School Principals (AAESP)

- Alaska Association of Secondary Principals, (AASSP)

- Alaska Association of School Business Officials (ALASBO)

DEED is particularly commended for its strong partnership with the Alaska Superintendents' Association (ASA) and the Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA) primarily due to shared professional development programs. The ACSA carries out many professional development programs that DEED cannot provide because of personnel limitations. This partnership is a win-win for both DEED and the ACSA and the customers both serve to enhance K-12 education in the state.

While there are likely to be many other successful partnerships, these were mentioned a number of times as being among the most effective collaborations involving DEED and other agencies/non-profits. (See **Recommendation 4.2.1** in the following section with respect to revisiting key DEED partnerships.)

Commendation 4.A

DEED is commended for developing a strong partnership (regarding professional development opportunities) with the Alaska Superintendents' Association (ASA) and the Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA).

4.2 PERFORMANCE OF DEED PARTNERSHIPS

Findings

Although DEED has many partnerships, only a few are collecting data to support and ensure the success of the collaborative efforts. DEED also lists some of its own divisions as "partners" which seems peculiar, and may create unnecessary

confusion about the relationships between these divisions. Partnerships are defined as an association of two or more people or organizations; DEED should not list its own divisions as partners. For example, DEED lists the Library Operations, Archives, Museum Operations, Online With Libraries and Live Homework Help (LAM), and Mt. Edgecumbe High School as two of its partners.

The number of partnerships involving DEED and other agencies appears to be extensive. Many partnerships are well known. Yet there are many other partnerships that appear to be of questionable value as functional collaborations at this time. For DEED to list these partners as active and true partnerships, they should be tracking success of the program or the profitability/cost-effectiveness for DEED even if they only serve as the fiscal agent.

The success of each partnership appears to be based on interviewee opinion without concrete data to support the opinions expressed. In most cases extensive interviews with numerous interviewees indicated an overwhelmingly positive response to various partnerships with other agencies and non-profits.

The majority of partnerships identified through interviews and a review of documents do not appear to have data to support the relative effectiveness of each partnership. It does not appear as if there is a definition of success to determine relative effectiveness.

The overriding question isn't so much if a partnership exists; this is supported by both budgets and websites. The pertinent questions are:

- How is each partnership defined by DEED?
- What is the quality of each partnership?
- Where is the data to support the positive outcomes of the partnership?

These three questions need to be answered to determine both partnership effectiveness and which partnerships should be eliminated or reduced.

Recommendation 4.2.1

Revisit the key partnerships DEED plans to include in its core services, ensure each partnership has established performance measures, and regularly assess

the outcomes of the performance or profitability/cost effectiveness measures in order to maintain the partnership. (Tier 1):

The frequency with which the programs are assessed for effectiveness will be based on the type of program, but most programs should be assessed every two years, at a minimum. (See **Recommendation 10.5.1**) related to DEED establishing a process for program evaluation.)

DEED's partnerships with other agencies and non-profits must move from a process-driven approach to one that is outcome driven. Rather than relying solely on interviewee perceptions of quality, defined outcome measures will provide the evidence needed to make appropriate assessments of these partnerships. Having quantitative and qualitative data to assess collaborative efforts will help to potentially avoid duplication while eliminating partnerships that do not meet outcome measures.

Any type of partnership, whether it is considered a "pass-through," or not, should be systematically evaluated by DEED to determine if time and resources should continue to be allocated to maintain it. DEED and the partner should set up measures and outcomes and determine on a periodic basis if the data supports the continuation of the partnership. If not, the partnership should be eliminated or re-defined. Partnerships require enormous staff time and should not be continued if data does not support positive student outcomes.

Best practices as outlined by the Baldrige Excellence Framework (National Institute of Standards and Technology) emphasize the importance of focusing on outcomes to evaluate goals and strategies of high performing organizations. To assess the quality of existing and potential partnerships involving DEED, a set of outcome measures should be created that adequately assess the quality of these partnerships.

By implementing this recommendation, DEED should maintain those active partnerships that are delivering positive outcomes based on performance measures and eliminate those partnerships where outcomes are not measured or cost-effective. This will help reduce the amount of time staff spent on partnerships that may not be producing positive outcomes.

Additional funding is not required to support this recommendation.

4.3 CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION (CTE) PARTNERSHIP

Findings

DEED has helped develop a partnership between DEED, the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD), and the Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) of the University of Alaska (UA) for a system to provide educational services to students and to address the workforce needs of the state.

The creation of the plan involved a broad cross-section of policy makers, educators, employers, state agencies, training institutions, and parent representatives. DEED, DOLWD, and UA staff authored the details of the Career and Technical Education (CTE) plan, which was vetted with stakeholders prior to finalization.

The full plan can be reviewed at: www.alaskacteplan.com/uploads/2/6/8/6/26865794/ak_cte_plan_aug2010.pdf

Interviews and a review of documents show that every April, a scorecard is produced to show progress on the plan, but the plan is outdated. **Exhibit 4-1** on the following page shows a copy of the most recent scorecard. As illustrated in **Exhibit 4-1**, all of the tasks are reported to be track or completed.

EXHIBIT 4-1
FY16 CTE Plan Priority Action Status (Scorecard)

Completed	On Track	Not On Track – Need to Address	Will Not Achieve – Target Goal Missed
1	11	0	0

Task	Date	Lead	Status Summary
STRATEGY 1.0: MAKE TRANSITIONS PLANNED AND ACCOUNTABLE FOR BOTH SUCCESSFUL STUDENT PROGRESS AND SYSTEMIC COOPERATION.			
Promote Alaska hire.	12/1/15	UA	Governor Walker issued an Alaska Hire notice on 6/10/15. Alaska Youth Works program being presented at this year's Alaska ACTE professional development conference; helping to promote youth hire. Alaska CTE Action Team are drafting sample questions to help educators more easily engage with business and industry; will promote at PDC and through CTE Plan website and DEED listserv.
Continue PLCP promotion with parents, counselors, administrators, teachers, employers.	Ongoing	All	Training delivered to University of Alaska identified Administrators and Coordinators to streamline use for students/staff; changed how UA site accounts are setup to promote ease of transfer between users. Trainings are being deployed across the state (Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau) for both secondary and postsecondary.
STRATEGY 2.0: ALIGN CURRICULA AT ALL TRAINING INSTITUTIONS TO MEET CURRENT INDUSTRY STANDARDS – INCLUDING ACADEMIC, PROFESSIONAL, AND TECHNICAL SKILLS – FROM ELEMENTARY THROUGH SECONDARY TO POSTSECONDARY AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT LEVELS.			
Refine and update common CTE-related definitions.	Ongoing	EED	CTE Common Definitions and Perkins Addendum published on CTE Plan site 6/16/15, revised 8/7/15. Continue to monitor, review, collect comments and update at least once annually. UA Concurrent Enrollment Policy is being reviewed by UA Statewide Academic Council to go before the BOR in September; will monitor for alignment.
Align CTE Plan and CTE Programs with current workforce development (WFD) plans and occupations	10/30/15	DOLWD	CTE Plan strategies have been cross-walked with the other WFD Plans and posted on CTE Plan website. APICC has contracted with McDowell group to prepare a crosswalk of occupations from each plan; first draft will be available in September.
STRATEGY 3.0: IDENTIFY AND PROMOTE CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION DELIVERY MODELS (PROGRAMS) THAT ENSURE ALL ALASKANS HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO ATTAIN THE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS NEEDED FOR FURTHER TRAINING AND CAREERS.			

	Increase use of apprenticeship model; including apprenticeship readiness and expanding the model beyond trades	12/1/15	DOLWD	Registered Apprenticeships (RA) are automatically eligible for inclusion on the WIOA Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL); information on ETPL will be sent to all RA programs in Alaska with 1-page related to using the Alaska Performance Scholarship; for current list of RA programs in Alaska: http://oa.doleta.gov/bat.cfm. RA presentation being provided at Alaska ACTE Professional Development Conference in October. State of Alaska DOLWD receive $2.9 million apprenticeship grant in September. ACPE provided 1-page informational APS flyer to be distributed to all apprenticeship programs at their fall meeting; www.earnandlearnak.org will note APS use for RA programs; DOLWD Facebook highlighting RA and APS flyer.
	Develop and publicize through centralized CTE website best practices for CTE programs.	Completed	All	Sample instruments are posted on CTE Plan website at http://www.alaskacteplan.com/team.html Monitor the work of ACTE and CREL - developing a summary and crosswalk of various frameworks currently in use - Building a Framework for Best Practice (May 2015 Techniques Magazine.)
STRATEGY 4.0: RECRUIT, DEVELOP, SUPPORT, AND RETAIN HIGH-QUALITY CTE TEACHERS AND FACULTY.				
	Identify CTE teacher/faculty shortages.	3/1/16	EED	Submitted request to add CTE focused section into bi-annual report for SB241; due to changes being discussed for teacher prep the report has been delayed; more information will be available later in the fall.
	Identify Professional Development needs for Alaska CTE professionals.	1/15/16	EED	Addressing through DEED Postsecondary grants.
STRATEGY 5.0: MAXIMIZE THE USE OF PUBLIC FACILITIES FOR TRAINING.				
	Engage ARDORS to advocate for shared use of public facilities.	3/1/16	UA	Met with ARDORs Program Manager to introduce Alaska CTE Plan and process; requested to participate in annual ARDORs meeting; planning additional meeting with program manager to review this year's CTE priorities to see where collaboration can occur.
STRATEGY 7.0: COMMUNICATE CTE PLAN PROGRESS TO CTE STAKEHOLDERS AND THE PUBLIC.				
	Identify CTE advocacy and messaging issues; disseminate pertinent information for various audiences.	Ongoing	All	Regular updates on WIOA, Perkins, STEPP and TVEP being distributed through Alaska CTE Plan website and DEED listserv. Alaska ACTE Plan representative will participate in ARDORs annual meeting in May. DEED started Rural Consortium Initiative to help facilitate CTE in rural districts. Sending Alaska CTE Plan quarterly updates to AWIB Exec. Director and Chair.

Engage CTE Action Committee.			Sending out quarterly updates; first for FY16 is in September.
Present at Alaska ACTE PDC	10/19/15	All	Alaska CTE Plan Action Team scheduled to present during roundtable section at Alaska ACTE Professional Development Conference on October 20th.

Source: http://www.alaskacteplan.com (updated 09/11/15).

While the effort among DEED, DOLWD, and AWIB is to be commended, interviews and a review of the CTE plan indicate that it has not been updated since 2010.

According to the Alaska CTE website[56], *the plan was developed to measure progress through the year 2012*. An updated plan cannot be found on the website and interviews indicate the need for revisions to the plan. The plan's scorecard was last updated in September 2015.

An effective CTE system requires coordination among responsible agencies (K-12 school districts, University of Alaska campuses, Regional Training Centers, Joint Apprenticeship Training Centers, and other training partners) to reduce regulatory, procedural, and fiscal barriers. Interviews with DEED staff, superintendents, and district-level staff indicate that the plan needs to be updated to reflect the ongoing changes in the state's industry needs and economic changes (i.e., dramatically lower state oil revenues).

Commendation 4.B

DEED is commended for assisting in the coordination of a strong partnership with other state entities to improve its career technology education initiatives offered to students and for using a scorecard to measure progress on the plan.

Recommendation 4.3.1

Convene meetings with partners to update CTE plan and ensure the updated plan is posted on the website and communicated clearly to all partners. (Tier 1)

At a minimum, the plan should be updated and strengthened in the following areas:

[56] www.alaskacteplan.com

- Promote registered apprenticeships and apprenticeship readiness.

- Identify advocacy items for legislators, and include other organizations in this effort, such as Alaska Regional Development Organizations (ARDOR), Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development (DCCED), and The Alaska Native American Business Enterprise Center (AK NABEC).

- Incentivize the hiring of Alaska high school seniors for Alaska jobs and work to remove barriers to employment.

The State of Washington has produced an exemplary updated CTE strategic plan available at the following link: http://www.k12.wa.us/LegisGov/2012documents/StrategicePlanforCTE2012.pdf

No additional cost is anticipated to implement this recommendation.

4.4 PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN DEED AND THE UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA

Findings

The State Board of Education and the University of Alaska Board of Regents should strengthen their partnership, specifically with respect to their roles as policy-making boards, in order to enhance K-12 services.

Interviews and a review of data indicate that the relationship between K-12 and the University of Alaska is fragmented, especially at the leadership level. The State Board of Education and the University Board of Regents have minimal interaction and apparently have not prioritized a partnership between the two governing boards. In interviews with both higher education and K-12 personnel, it was pointed out the Commissioner has recommended that the State Board of Education and the Board of Regents need to collaborate more often to be a more coherent K-16 system.

An interviewee commented that DEED *was not capitalizing on university relationships; not looking ahead to partnerships with the university system*. For example, many high school graduates entering the college system need

remediation, yet both boards appear not to be working collaboratively to improve the remediation rate for those entering the UA system.

ANSEP is a statewide initiative designed to recruit and attract more native students towards greater interest in the fields of science and engineering. The governance responsibility of ANSEP rests primarily with UA. UA is responsible for program development implementation while DEED is responsible for the distribution of funds.

ANSEP was begun in 1995; since the program was initiated approximately 400 Alaska Native students have graduated with an engineering background. The program today begins in the sixth grade and an estimated 1200 Alaska Native students are currently in the pipeline for attending higher education with a background in the sciences.[57,58]

Interviews with both UA and DEED staff indicate disconnect regarding interagency cooperation between DEED and UA. Neither organization expressed sustained concern about the success of the agencies working together.

Recommendation 4.4.1

Strengthen the partnership between the State Board of Education and the University Board of Regents to provide effective and efficient interagency support. (Tier 1)

According to interviews conducted with representatives of both DEED and UA, it does not appear that a strong, viable relationship exists between the State Board of Education and the University Board of Regents. The State Board is inexperienced as a whole, in terms of total years served on the board.

The State Board also appears to have prioritized the internal mechanisms of K-12 education to date, primarily focusing on the creation of a new strategic plan to revise priorities.

Given the current State Board's focus on strategic plan development, it is especially important that an external focus on partnerships be a part of that

[57] Interview: University of Alaska program officer ANSEP, December 16, 2015
[58] http://www.ansep.net/

strategic plan. In light of emergent fiscal challenges, strong partnerships across K-16 academic programs will be advantageous in strengthening programs with fewer resources, and reducing or eliminating duplication of programs and/or strategies.

There is a need for the State Board of Education and the University Board of Regents to meet regularly to develop a strong level of interagency cooperation, especially given the relatively new group of State Board members. In particular, it is important is for both boards to determine what programs and practices are being duplicated in each educational system and determine which organization should be responsible for the program/practice. For example, does the University of Alaska's role in K-12 staff development duplicate DEED's role in providing the same services?

A number of states have created viable and strong partnerships involving higher education. The state of North Carolina has created an Education Cabinet composed of the State Department of Public Instruction (including the State Board of Education), the University of North Carolina statewide campus system and the community college statewide System. Another best practice of note is the Arizona P-20 Council.

Additional funding is not required to support this recommendation.

Recommendation 4.4.2

Create a strong partnership between DEED and The Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program. (Tier 2)

Both UA and DEED need to create a stronger partnership with respect to ANSEP that is based on mutual trust, support and a review of the future of the program. Given the budget cuts to ANSEP that occurred in 2015 and are proposed in 2016, the future of ANSEP appears to be in question. Although ANSEP has numerous partners including, but not limited to Alaska Airlines, ANSEP alumni, and the Shell Exploration and Production, DEED and ANSEP should be collaborating closely on the key components of the program (i.e., curriculum, technology, leadership). Many of the best practices originating at ANSEP should be shared with districts statewide.

Since ANSEP is likely to be in financial limbo, it is critical that the agencies work together to determine the future direction and services ANSEP can offer. A mutually agreed upon plan of action, based on an honest assessment of interagency cooperation and financial viability, is critical to their future partnership. DEED and ANSEP should consider developing a memorandum of understanding to ensure the partnership is supported by both parties.

Recommendation 4.4.3

Create of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between DEED and ANSEP. (Tier 2)

Many SEAs and higher education institutions across the nation have developed MOUs to ensure ongoing mutual support for such programs. The states of North Carolina, Oregon, and Tennessee are three examples among many. The State Boards of Education in Washington DC is a resource for further analysis.

According to DEED, starting in FY 2017, ANSEP will no longer receive any funding through the department's budget. The review team believes this change in funding is further reason to establish an MOU, to ensure that a collaborative and mutually beneficial partnership is maintained through the transition.

No additional financial resources are needed to implement this recommendation.

4.5 DEED PARTNERSHIPS: ACCOUNTABILITY AND OVERLAP

Findings

A lack of accountability exists in a number of interagency and external (not-for-profit) DEED partnerships. While interviews indicate that DEED effectively collaborates with a number of agencies and public and/or private entities, a lack of data exists to support the effectiveness of the partnerships.

The review team noted that DEED lists the Division of Library, Archives and Museums, Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education, Mt. Edgecumbe High School, State Facilities Maintenance, Professional Teaching Practices, Alaska State Council on the Arts, and the Online with Libraries Live Homework as official partners, yet these units are actually divisions with DEED.

The number of partnerships involving DEED and other agencies appears to be extensive. Many partnerships are well known. Yet there are many other partnerships that appear to be of questionable value as functional collaborations at this time.

There are over 20 partnerships involving DEED and other agencies/non-profits. The success of each partnership appears to be based on interviewee opinion without concrete data to support the opinions expressed. In most cases extensive interviews with numerous interviewees indicated an overwhelmingly positive response to various partnerships with other agencies and non-profits.

The number of partnerships identified through interviews and a review of documents do not appear to have data to support the relative effectiveness of each partnership. It does not appear as if there is a definition of success outcomes to determine relative effectiveness in many of DEEDs partnerships.

Best practices as outlined by the Baldrige framework emphasize the importance of focusing on outcomes to evaluate goals and strategies of high performing organizations. To assess the quality of existing and potential partnerships involving DEED, a set of outcome measures should be created that adequately assess the quality of the partnerships.

Rather than solely relying on interviewee perceptions of quality, a set of outcome measures will provide evidence needed to make appropriate assessments of these partnerships. Having quantitative and qualitative data to assess collaborative efforts will help to potentially avoid duplication while eliminating partnerships that do not meet outcome measures.

DEED's partnerships with other agencies and non-profits must move from a process-driven approach to one that is outcome driven. Additional funding is not required to support this recommendation.

Recommendation 4.5.1

Ensure each DEED partnership has a clear definition and roles within the partnerships, including established goals and metrics. (Tier 1)

Given the number of active partnerships involving DEED and other agencies, it is important for DEED to have data to support the viability of each partnership. In

times of budget reductions, staff time and resources should only be spent on programs and partnerships that can specifically show the return on investment. If DEED cannot show definitive data of positive outcomes within two years, they should eliminate the initiative.

A review of each partnership's purpose, and establishment of measurable performance metric is required to provide greater clarity as to which partnerships add value and which should be eliminated. This will enable DEED to re-allocate resources from those partnerships that need to be eliminated to those that need to be strengthened, while reducing or streamlining staff time required to maintain them.

Additional funding is not required to support this recommendation.

4.6 AGENCY PARTNERSHIPS: EARLY CHILDHOOD INITIATIVES

Findings

DEED has established a strong network of partners in supporting its early childhood initiatives.

Exhibit 4-B, on the following page, shows a listing of the direct funding support partners as well as non-funding partners of the various early childhood initiatives in the state. According to interviews, the Best Beginnings and the Parents as Teachers could lose funding in 2017 making it even more critical that DEED maintain its strong network of partnerships to support its initiatives.

EXHIBIT 4-2
DEED'S EARLY CHILDHOOD PARTNERS

Program Component	DEED Direct Funding Support Partners

Early Learning Coordination	• Pre-K Grant Programs*
	  o Funding for 8 LEA partnerships. Serving 319 children.
	• Best Beginnings
	  o Funds to coordinate literacy and book distribution for children ages 0-5.
	• Parents as Teachers
	  o Funding for 4 non-profit programs to support home visiting services for 143 0-3 children.
	• Head Start Grants
	  o Funding for 17 Region X & Region XI Head Start programs to assist those programs with meeting a 20% federal match
	• threadAlaska
	  o Funding to provide professional learning to early childhood professionals.
	• State Libraries and Museums
	  o Funding to provide board books for public libraries.
	• Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council
	  o Co-Chaired with DHHS
	  o Co-Coordinated with DHHS
	• Alaska Head Start Association
	  o Funding and support provided for Head Start Association meetings.
	• Alaska AEYC
	  o Funding and support for early learning conferences

DEED Internal Department Partnerships

	• Special Education Part B 619- Monitoring of LEA programs that provide special education services for children identified as special needs ages 3-5. • Title I Funded Preschool Programs- Monitoring of LEA programs that use Title I funding for preschool education. Currently 4 LEA's use funding for preschool services. • Child Nutrition -Monitoring and compliance for programs using USDA funding to provide meals in childcare, Head Start and preschool programs.
Federally Funded Head Start Programs	
Region X Head Start Programs Non-Tribal or Migrant	• Bristol Bay Native Association • CCS Head Start • Rural CAP Head Start • Kids Corps Head Start • Thrive Alaska
Region XI Head Start Programs Alaskan Native/American Indian Programs.	• Aleutian Pribolof • Association of Village Presidents • Tlingit Haida • Chugachmuit • Cook Inlet • Council of Athabascan • Fairbanks Native • Kawerak • Keniatze Indian Tribe • Metlakatla • Tanana Chiefs
Coalition for Education Equity (formerly CEAAC)	
Moore Settlement Funds for Pre-K programs	• Bering Strait • Lower Kuskokwim • North Slope • Northwest Arctic • Yupiit • Yukon Flats • Kashunamiut

In addition to all of the above funded partner relationships, DEED Early Learning also has partnerships and coordinates efforts with the following	
Department of Health and Human Services	• Department of Seniors and Disabilities/Infant Learning Program • Child Care Programming Office • Department of Public Health Maternal and Child Home Visiting Program Coordinated efforts to insure comprehensive health and mental health services are being provided on a birth – age 8 continuum. DEED participates in regular ongoing stakeholder meetings and training to staff.
Alaska Mental Health Board	DEED works closely on the Alaska Adverse Childhood Experiences study and disseminates information.
Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council	AECCC provides an opportunity to partner and share information with the following partners: • Governor's Office • Alaska Association of School Boards • Alaska Association of School Administrators • Association for Infant Learning • Alaska Head Start Association • Alaska Child Care Referral and Resource Center • All Alaska Pediatric Partnerships • Alaska Children's Trust

Source: DEED's Early Childhood Division, 2016.

Commendation 4.C

DEED is commended for establishing and maintaining partnerships to support its early childhood initiatives.

See **Recommendation 9.1.1** for additional findings and recommendations related to early childhood initiatives.

4.7 POOLED PURCHASING FOR LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Findings

Local school districts in Alaska are not capitalizing on a variety of pooled purchasing opportunities, including purchasing from state master contracts that could produce significant savings. DEED can help augment strategic procurement by local school districts by promoting purchasing opportunities and sharing best practices.

Alaska Statute 36.30.700 allows political subdivisions and local public procurement units to purchase from state-negotiated contracts. Dozens of contracts are available to cities, boroughs, school districts and other political subdivisions of the State of Alaska, including ones for:

- Office supplies and equipment;
- Computers, software, and wireless service/equipment;
- Safety and security equipment;
- Facilities/janitorial supplies;
- Vehicles (purchase and rental);
- Health and medical supplies;
- Electrical services and fuel; and
- Transportation (fleet and charters).[59]

These contracts allow small purchasers to leverage better prices due to economies of scale. Alaska is also a member state of various national purchasing associations allowing local school districts to access several multi-state contracts. Pooled purchasing not only creates lower commodity prices but also can save local districts valuable staff time spent reviewing bids and negotiating contract terms with multiple vendors. Statewide, pooled purchasing could eliminate substantial duplication when multiple districts write contract specifications, process bids based on those specifications, and then award contracts for the same type of services and materials.

[59] "State Contracts For Use By Political Subdivisions," Alaska Department of Administration, Division of General Services, available at: http://doa.alaska.gov/dgs/polisubs/.

State procurement officials noted during interviews for this review that certain state contracts may be particularly appealing to local school districts, including:

- Information technology and computers – with 30 vendors under contract and with negotiated prices for Apple products that are better than education pricing;
- IT infrastructure, such as wireless access points and wireless routers; and
- Aircraft charter contracts.

Another significant benefit for local districts is that virtually all state contract prices include freight costs. Small, rural districts reported in interviews that freight costs were one of the greatest challenges to their budget.

In spite of these potential savings, Department of Administration (DOA) staff note that they seldom work with local school districts that wish to purchase from State contracts. (Note: Because political subdivisions are not required to coordinate with DOA when purchasing from state contracts, DOA does not have verifiable data on school district utilization rates.) To utilize state contracts, local agencies need only reference the contract name/number and confirm they are an Alaska political subdivision (often simply by providing a ".gov" or ".ak.us" email address to verify).

During project interviews, local school business officials, DEED staff members, representatives of Southeast Regional Resource Center (SERRC) and state educational associations all consistently reported that there is minimal collaborative purchasing among districts or use of state contracts. However, district leaders expressed great interest in learning more about contracting opportunities and potential savings – particularly in areas such as fuel and bulk food purchases. Similarly, DOA noted that they would like to learn more about the products and services purchased by districts so they can expand partnership opportunities and potentially find even better prices by growing the State's purchasing pool.

At present, DEED does not collect or share district best practices related to purchasing. Several successful efforts were noted during interviews for this review

such as Bering Strait's partnership with the local economic development corporation and other local entities to purchase fuel at $1 less per gallon.

Both local districts and DOA commented in interviews that dissemination of purchasing best practices and basic information about state contracts would be particularly beneficial to districts with constant turnover of business officials creating little institutional knowledge. DOA officials noted that they have not formally asked state agencies (like DEED) to distribute information to local partners about state contracts, but they would welcome interagency collaboration on ways to do this.

Recommendation 4.7.1

DEED should work with the Department of Administration to educate local school districts about pooled purchasing opportunities, including purchases from state contracts. (Tier 2)

The state education agency is often one of few resources available to local districts interested in pursuing pooled and collaborative purchasing. DEED's procurement staff should partner with the DOA to share their purchasing expertise and savings opportunities with local districts.

DEED and DOA should work together to ensure that local school business officials are notified of pooled purchasing (particularly state contract) opportunities. State procurement experts should also inform districts of national consortium purchasing prospects such as the eMarket Center (an online catalogue of the Western States Contracting Alliance/National Association of State Procurement Officers) in which any Alaska political subdivisions can access national contracts.

DOA offers a number of best practices and training resources that DEED could encourage districts to utilize, including:

- Smart practices assembled by the Alaska Procurement Officers Group (APOG) and access to a DOA wiki site for state procurement officials;
- The DOA Procurement Report, a newsletter currently distributed statewide and to many local school districts; and

- The DOA Procurement Academy, a training offered for state employees around the state.

Recommendation 4.7.2

Conduct a survey of local districts to evaluate purchasing needs and determine areas for potential partnerships and collaborative purchasing. (Tier 3)

District leaders are very interested in learning more about contracting opportunities and potential savings. As stated earlier, DOA would like to learn more about the products and services purchased by districts so they can expand partnership opportunities and potentially find even better prices by growing the state's purchasing pool. For example, according to DOA, the current in-state car rental master contract includes school district use data that added value to price negotiations. Similar opportunities can be ascertained by surveying local districts about their purchasing needs and practices. See **Exhibit 4-3** below for an example of the State Cooperative Purchasing Survey used by the State of New Jersey.

EXHIBIT 4-3
STATE OF NEW JERSEY
COOPERATIVE PURCHASING PROGRAM SURVEY

State Cooperative Purchasing Program Survey
Contact Information **Name:** **Agency:** **Position:** **Phone Number/Ext:** **E-mail:**
During the past two years, have you used the State Cooperative Purchasing Program? **If you have used the Program, what factors were most important to your decision to use the Cooperative Purchasing Program? Check all that apply.** ☐ **Save administrative costs** ☐ **Save staff time** ☐ **Lower purchase costs** ☐ **Flexibility of products and vendor choice** ☐ **Good contract terms and conditions** ☐ **Program staff support and assistance**

Additional Comments:

The State is interested in leveraging State and Local spends for lower costs. What top 5 areas of your current spend would you like to see leveraged?

Were you satisfied with the vendors available through the Cooperative Purchasing Program? If Not, please explain:

Explain any problems you encountered using the Cooperative Purchasing Program.

What's your biggest complaint about the Cooperative Purchasing Program?

If you don't use the state's Cooperative Purchasing Program, why not?

What changes would you suggest to improve the Cooperative Purchasing Program?

Are you currently using the Cooperative Purchasing Program E-Portal that utilizes the internet for the sharing of information and new initiatives? (Register at: http://www.nj.gov/dca/surveys/ppsurvey.htm)

Would you be interested in attending a training program on how to better understand and use State Contracts? If so, what topics?

Source: State of New Jersey, Department of the Treasury, 2015.

DEED and DOA should work collaboratively to expand pooled purchasing opportunities for districts utilizing existing resources with no impact on DEED's budget. This could be a great opportunity for DEED to enhance the support services it offers to school districts at little to no cost.

It should also be noted that the State of Alaska does not charge school districts for the administration of state contracts. Districts could realize significant savings without incurring any additional contract administrative costs.

4.8 STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATIONS IMPROVEMENTS

Findings

DEED has made concerted efforts to improve communication with its stakeholders. Three examples illustrate the new efforts.

First, DEED is beginning a new series of videos entitled DEED Explains, which describe current educational topics in Alaska's educational system. The first video features a key DEED administrator explaining information related to the

new Alaska standards. DEED posted the video on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KUau-fAr7gw

Second, due to the increased dissatisfaction of district staff with the issues surrounding the Alaska Measures of Progress (AMP), a commissioner's representative superintendent working group was developed in December 2015 to ensure a sampling of superintendents are able to provide feedback to the commissioner on key initiatives. The group is voluntary; they occasionally meet in person and plan to meet more often via teleconference.

Third, in October and November 2015, Commissioner Hanley spoke to several stakeholder groups about education in Alaska. He spoke to a group of teachers at a statewide science and math conference, to the Alaska Association of School Boards, the Anchorage and Fairbanks Chambers of Commerce, and the Tanana Chiefs.

Commendation 4.D

DEED is commended for demonstrably improving its communication efforts with various stakeholders.

4.9 STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATIONS: MISSION, VISION, AND GOALS

Findings

While DEED has improved various efforts to communicate to stakeholders, district and DEED staff interviews and surveys indicate there is a lack of a coherent vision and mission for the state's department of education. Numerous interviews indicate that district and DEED staff are working in *silos* and do not understand the big picture of what the commissioner and State Board of Education want to achieve with regard to DEED's overall mission, vision, and goals. Interviews with staff and districts shared a common theme: *I don't know who is in charge of education in our state.*

Examples of interview comments related to this topic include:

- *I don't know what DEED's vision and mission is...(maybe it could be to improve student graduation rates and bring science scores up). No one ever told me their vision. We get memos from DEED saying this or that is*

going to change, but not any specifics and we are left to our own devices to interpret the change. (Superintendent)

- *I do not know what the state's vision is for Alaska.* (This statement was made multiple times).

Survey comments included similar statements:

- *I don't know when the mission statement was changed. The last mission statement was thought up with input of all DEED staff at a summit. Advising staff of the change in mission statement should have been the first step.*

- *DEED's communication effectiveness varies by department.*

- *I would need to sit at my desk everyday and just read DEED emails and filter them to know which is important. It is a cacophony of emails that I triage and the principals' triage. It is too much. We need clearer communication.*

Our team asked a number of interviewees whether they had ever been interviewed by DEED for input on key initiatives or ways to be more efficient and effective. The only response that indicated a survey was administered was in the area of school district transportation. One district board member interviewee told a Public Works team member, *It was refreshing to be interviewed today and asked our local opinion… DEED has never done this – it's long overdue*.

Most states have a link on their website that shares major accomplishments with readers. DEED's website has a few accomplishments noted in various areas such as *DEED is pleased to report that no Alaskan schools meet the case definition of persistently dangerous for the 2013-14 school year*; however, a compiled list of accomplishments is not found.

While DEED does publish a weekly newsletter if districts sign up for it, the need for clearer communication to the districts exists. Given the turnover in district leadership and staff, it is critical that DEED communicates its message consistently across all districts in the state.

As mentioned in the previous finding, a superintendent working group was developed in December 2015 to ensure a representative group of superintendents are able to provide feedback to the commission on key initiatives; however, the group is meeting on an ad hoc basis and has not been formalized.

Recommendation 4.9.1

Ensure the new commissioner of education formalizes the superintendent working group and allows the group the opportunity for regular input on DEED's initiatives, goals, and programs. (Tier 1)

Recommendation 4.9.2

Ensure the new commissioner of education provides a state of the state education address annually to set the direction of the state's strategic plan and expectations of districts. (Tier 1)

Recommendation 4.9.3

Survey district staff annually to gather input on their issues, needs, and requests, so that DEED can respond appropriately. (Tier 1)

Recommendation 4.9.4

Reduce the number of electronic communications to districts and develop a forum for communication that consolidates routine, non-urgent information sent to superintendents and other need-to-know personnel. (Tier 2)

For example, the newly appointed Texas commissioner of education communicates regularly through a blog. This form of communication provides important information for teachers, administrators, parents, and students involved in Texas public education. The blog can be accessed at: http://tea.texas.gov/Collections/Commissioner_Blog/

Additionally, the Texas Education Agency web page offers a plethora of information for district superintendents, parents, teachers, legislators, and other stakeholders. The agency produces bi-monthly newsletters, posts all correspondence sent to all superintendents, and posts frequently asked questions and responses so that all stakeholders are receiving the same clear

message. The site can be accessed at: http://tea.texas.gov/communications/tet.aspx

The Florida commissioner of education hosts a monthly call for all 67 superintendents to discuss pressing issues and potential solutions.

Several state departments of education survey district staff to assist in making statewide decisions. Some states work with their state superintendent organization to distribute and analyze results. Examples of surveys produced by various state agencies are available at the sites below.

Illinois:
https://www.iasb.com/services/2013DistrictSuperintendentSurveySummary.pdf

Vermont:
http://education.vermont.gov/documents/educ_memo_0910_teacher_pricipal_survey_results.pdf

Maryland:
http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/msde/divisions/instruction/ScienceSocialStudiesSurveys.html

Recommendation 4.9.5

Compile a list of the state's education accomplishments and prominently post it on DEED's website. (Tier 2)

Kentucky, for example, proudly lists the state's educational accomplishments. The list can be found at: http://education.ky.gov/comm/p12/Pages/default.aspx.

After each State Board meeting, the Texas Education Agency prepares a newsletter highlighting all accomplishments and awards. Examples can be found at: http://tea.texas.gov/communications/tet.aspx.

The Montana State Department of Education, a selected peer agency for this study, shares positive news about its high graduation rate on its website home page at: http://www.opi.mt.gov/.

The New Mexico Public Education Department, another peer agency, has the commissioner of education delivering a speech titled "Kids First, New Mexico Wins" on its website. It can be found at: http://ped.state.nm.us/ped/topnews.html.

This recommendation can be accomplished at a minimal cost to the state.

This page intentionally left blank.

5 OBJECTIVE 7: COMPLAINTS

Objective 7: Evaluate whether DEED promptly and efficiently addresses complaints.

Overview and Summary of the Conclusion for Objective 7

Few concerns are registered against the Department of Education and Early Learning via the formal mechanism of complaint to the Office of the State Ombudsman. These issues are consistently addressed in a timely and effective fashion by DEED.

Personnel in the Office of the State Ombudsman compiled complaints about DEED that were received from 2006-present. During the ten-year period, 35 contacts about DEED were initiated. Seventeen of these contacts were actual complaints. Other contacts were resolved as informational referrals; e.g., individuals who needed information about where to address a concern, individuals who were frustrated with local districts, etc.

There were no discernible thematic patterns in the 17 contacts that were actual complaints. Further, there were very few complaints that would rise to a matter of significant concern. For each complainant, once assisted or referred to a resource to address their issues, they did not seek further redress from the Office of the State Ombudsman.

5.1 OPEN RECORDS REQUESTS

Findings

Few open records requests are received by DEED. Requests for records can provide an indication of patterns of concern. Over a three-year period, DEED received 31 requests for records that are open to the public under the state's open-records statutes. An examination of the summary of these records requests did not reveal patterns of concern about DEED or its staff. All of DEED's responses to the requests were within the specified deadline.

Commendation 5.A

Requests for open records do not reveal a pattern of concerns about DEED. Records indicate that such requests are consistently addressed in a timely fashion by DEED.

5.2 COMPLAINTS PROCESS

Findings

DEED does not have effective, transparent processes by which concerns may be submitted to DEED and to the State Board of Education.

Public state agencies, by virtue of their status as entities serving the interests of citizens, should have transparent, user-friendly mechanisms by which the concerns of citizens and representatives of constituent organizations can be submitted to the state agencies. *A complaint management system must be visible and accessible to consumers.*[60] DEED's mechanisms for facilitating the submission of concerns are neither transparent nor user-friendly.

The benefits of a transparent and user-friendly complaints system are multiple. Such complaint systems benefits include:

- Enhances the image of the agency as accessible and user-friendly;
- Diminishes the belief that *government service is inferior service*;
- Provides useful feedback to the agency on its services and the quality of service delivery. Complaint mechanisms undergird a *culture of service*;
- Provides an ongoing "listening" mechanism for the agency; and
- Keeps problems from escalating. If an agency has a visible, accessible and responsive complaints handling system the users are less likely to elevate their complaint up the governmental hierarchy.[61] Survey

[60] i-Sight. *Publicizing the Customer Complaint Management System.* Retrieved http://www.customerexpressions.com/cex/cexweb.nsf/(GetPages)/b9513996b8377c9285256ff2006ad74e

[61] Dee, 1997.

responses have indicated that this dynamic of "escalation" has been a problem within DEED. The escalation of user complaints surrounding the implementation of the Alaska Measures of Progress (AMP) assessment offers one such example.

While the Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development provides opportunities for public comment on matters of interest and concern to the public, an examination of the DEED website reveals that the State Board and DEED proactively facilitate only comment on proposed regulations. The bylaws (Sec. 5.5.5) for the conduct of meetings of the State Board of Education and Early Development require an agenda item for public comment on proposed regulations, and/or any agenda item, or any non-agenda item.[62] Public oral comment may be offered and written testimony is also received. There is also notice on the agenda that a concerned citizen can offer comment by appearing at a regional Legislative Information Office. While the link to comment on proposed regulations appears both on DEED's page and State Board of Education pages, the site does not specify a mechanism for comment upon issues that fall into the "agenda or non-agenda" items specified in its by-laws. Further, agenda materials for State Board meetings are voluminous (544 pages in December of 2015), and are not attended by a table of contents; thus, finding information about agenda items is difficult.

The submission of concerns to DEED staff is likewise not well facilitated. The DEED public information officer often fields complaint calls, but the site does not identify him as a contact for such purposes. A review of the DEED website is instructive. Contact information for the agency is provided on the home page, although a phone number for only five of the units within the agency is provided; email addresses are not listed for these units. The exception is the Home page link under Contact Information to the Division of Teaching and Learning Support. This link provides a topical directory with contact persons names, email addresses and phone numbers. The other contacts are major units, and knowing which unit or sub-unit handles which specific issues is not something that can be easily discerned by the site visitor. If persons with concerns have online access with a user-friendly process for finding information, they might resolve their concerns without involving a staff member. If there is a user-friendly process for

[62] Department of Education and Early Development (2012). *Bylaws of the Board of Education and Early Development.* Juneau: Department of Education and Early Development.

discerning whom to contact for which specific issues, the concerns may be resolved more readily and not compounded by the individual's frustration at not being able to expeditiously secure assistance.

There is no link to a department-wide staff directory from either the home page or the About DEED page. Entering the terms *directory, DEED directory,* and *staff directory* in the search bar on the DEED Home page produced a *did not match* response in each instance. Thus, trying to determine to whom concerns about a particular issue might be addressed via a staff directory is unnecessarily difficult.

In the November 2015 survey, less than half of participating superintendents agreed that DEED effectively communicates with other constituencies, such as the public, school boards, legislature, and other stakeholders. Under the home page link entitled *Parents and Students*, there are some general links, and some specific links, but there are only two that address a concern. One is *Critique school facilities in your districts* and the other is *The Professional Teaching Practices Commission - where parents and other members of the public can report an educator for unethical behavior.* Ironically, entering the term *complaint* in the DEED search bar on the home page led only to links that explain how to file complaints with other agencies.

Finally, it is instructive to note that in the November 2015 survey of local superintendents, less than half of respondents agreed with the statement that DEED effectively addresses complaints.

Commendation 5.B

Few formal complaints are registered against DEED. DEED processes formal complaints in a timely and appropriate manner.

Recommendation 5.2.1

Appoint an official DEED designee for complaints management and provide easy to find, user-friendly links for lodging complaints on the DEED website, and assisting site visitors with finding answers to their questions through DEED. (Tier 1)

DEED should formally designate a DEED staff person to manage complaints and facilitate the access of the public to information about making complaints. Provide training for this individual on techniques of receiving and processing

complaints for resolution. The appointed individual should also serve as a liaison to the DEED web-master to ensure ease of public access on the DEED website to information about the complaints filing procedure. This individual should be assigned responsibility for ensuring that contact information for addressing specific needs or concerns is clear and easy to find by the public.

Several best practice resources for implementing this recommendation are cited below:

Complaints process: There are numerous guides to effective complaints processes. Materials from i-Sight are useful and a link is provided below. Multiple agencies in Alaska state government facilitate the filing of complaints and their links can serve as useful exemplars. A few illustrations can be found at the internet links below.

Complaints: *A Critical Form of Communication.* i-Sight at: http://www.customerexpressions.com/CEx/cexweb.nsf/(GetPages)/f0807e646e0c9bb885256ff20069fb8e

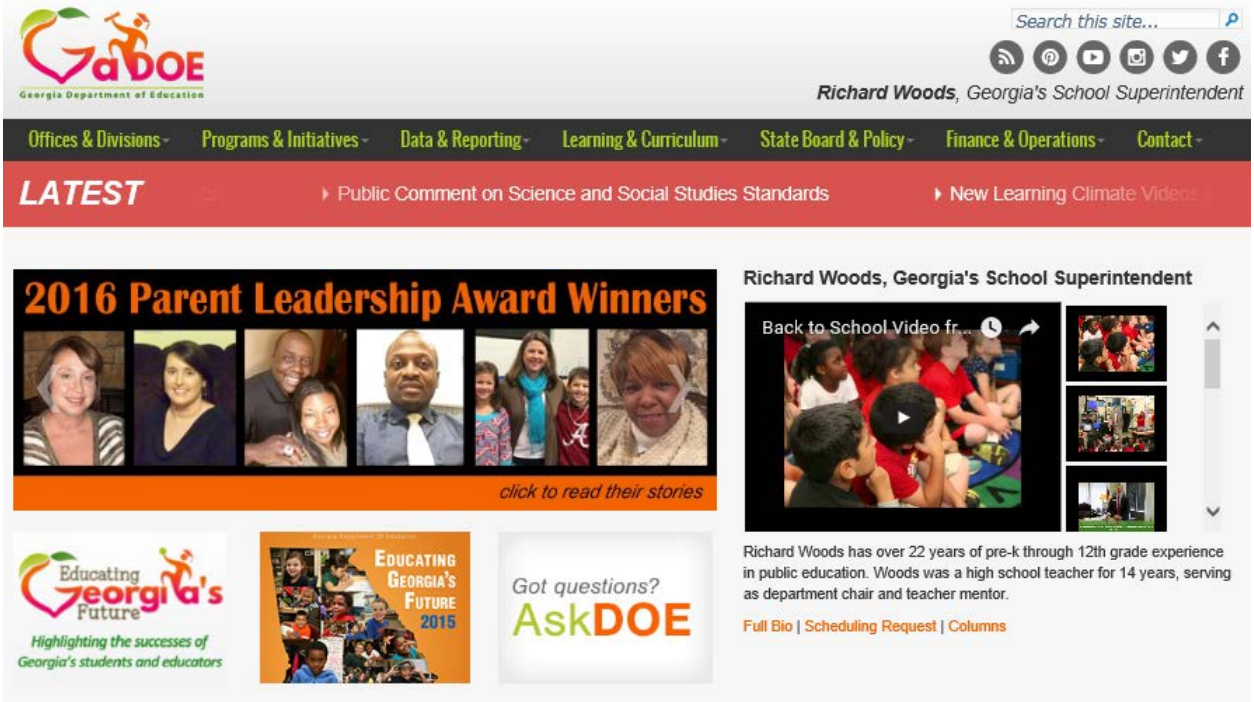
"Complaint FAQs." Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development, Corporations, Business and Profession Licensing at: https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/cbpl/complaintfaqs.aspx

"Making a Complaint." Food Safety and Sanitation Program. Division of Environmental Health at: http://dec.alaska.gov/eh/fss/food/complaints.html

"Complaint Resolution." Child Support Services Division. Department of Revenue at: http://www.csed.state.ak.us/complaint.aspx

Information on whom to contact, and for what purpose: This should be a very visible link from the home page of the DEED website. The Georgia Department of Education website offers a useful exemplar. The AskDOE link appears prominently in the agency's home page. The image in **Exhibit 5-1** on the following page is of the top quarter of the Georgia Department of Education Home page.

EXHIBIT 5-1
GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION WEBSITE HOME PAGE



Source: Georgia Department of Education, 2016 (www.gadoe.org).

Costs to implement the website enhancements should be minimal; such enhancements can be addressed as the site is routinely edited and updated. Similarly, there should be minimal costs involved in assigning responsibility for managing complaints and facilitating the access of individuals with concerns or needs for information to that information and/or agency personnel. There is already an individual in the agency to which concerns or complaints are directed, and the costs to provide some additional training for this individual should be minimal; one day of training should suffice.

Findings

DEED does not have a communications system for complaints management that is well developed and effective.

Effective communications strategies for complaints management include:

- Processes for routinely conveying to organization members and stakeholders information about organizational updates, processes and expectations, proactive efforts to address issues that have the potential to

become contentious, and responses to issues about which there are already concerns;

- Routine mechanisms for gathering internal and external feedback;
- Engagement of internal organization members and external stakeholders in the processes of planning, decision-making, and policymaking;
- Regular application of input and feedback to the continuous improvement cycles of planning, implementing, studying effects, and modifying as needed; and
- Proactive communications mechanisms for resolving problems, which inevitably arise in spite of the above-mentioned activities.[63]

The November 2015 survey provided insight into the concerns about issues of communication that are pertinent to this finding. While over 60 percent of superintendents agreed that DEED communicates effectively with districts, nearly three in ten respondents disagreed. Less than half of superintendents (43 percent) agreed DEED effectively communicates with other constituencies, such as the public, school boards, legislature, and other stakeholders. Nearly three out of five superintendents disagreed with or had no opinion on the statement that DEED effectively addresses complaints.

Comments from the November 2015 surveys and interviews with a number of individuals reinforce the concern that DEED does not adequately communicate with internal and external stakeholders.

This finding does not suggest that all of DEED's communications are ineffective. (See **Commendation 4.D** regarding DEED's recent improvements in communication.) However, as one DEED interviewee noted, *Communication requires ongoing effort. The relationship that the department has with districts and stakeholders is much stronger than it was four years ago but still has a way to go*. Another staff member said, *We're always trying to improve our*

[63] i-Sight. *Complaints: A Critical Form of Communication.* Retrieved from http://www.customerexpressions.com/CEx/cexweb.nsf/(GetPages)/f0807e646e0c9bb885256ff20069fb8e

communication with constituencies. We do make improvements, but there's always room to grow. Consistency of effectiveness in communication across the organization is also important. One superintendent said, *DEED's communication effectiveness varies by department*.

Effective communication with districts, organizations, and other stakeholders is important, as is effective internal communication. Interviewees indicated that communication across divisions of DEED and by senior leaders is sometimes inadequate and ineffective, as illustrated in the following comment:

- *Time and time again, with almost every single major announcement that goes out via email from the commissioner or the department head to districts - the staff is not told ahead of time! It is very embarrassing to have a district call asking about the particulars of a commissioner or department head memo when I haven't been made aware of the memo first. Internal staff should always be prepped before a major policy memo goes out to districts*.

The comment of a senior leader in a collaborating organization was also instructive:

- *DEED needs a good advisory process for engaging K-12 folks in decision-making and policy making. It needs to be proactive process. They need active engagement... Emails won't get it done.*

Recommendation 5.2.2

Activate a comprehensive group of advisory entities to enhance communication. (Tier 1)

Approaches to the types of committees vary by state, but it is common to find standing advisory committees of superintendents, principals, teachers, parents, local school board members, and representatives of community organizations. Exemplars from other states are noted below.

Kentucky: The Kentucky commissioner of education engages with the following advisory groups.[64]

- Commissioner's Program Review Task Force
- Commissioner's Raising Achievement/Closing Gaps Council (CRACG)
- Local School Board Member Advisory Council (LSBMAC)
- Parents Advisory Council (PAC)
- Next-Generation Student Council (NGSC)
- Principals Advisory Council (PrAC)
- Superintendents Advisory Council (SAC)
- Teachers Advisory Council (TAC)
- Unbridled Learning Guiding Coalition

Georgia: The state superintendent provides a direct Web link to information about his parent teacher and student advisory councils from his biography page on the Georgia Department of Education website at http://www.gadoe.org/Pages/superintendent.aspx.

Indiana: Advisory committee of superintendents http://www.iapss-in.org/standing-committees/state-superintendents-advisory-committee/

Alabama: Student advisory committee https://www.alsde.edu/sec/comm/Pages/sac.aspx

Oklahoma: One of the most comprehensive approaches to advisement of a state education agency is found in Oklahoma.[65] Committees include the following constituencies: business, non-profit/wrap-around services, parents, foundations/funders, teachers, principals, superintendents, education associations, faith-based, Hispanic, African American, Native American, counselors, special education, charter schools, school foundations, retired educators.

---

[64] Advisory Groups. Kentucky Department of Education. Retrieved from http://education.ky.gov/commofed/adv/Pages/default.aspx

[65] *Superintendent Hofmeister creates advisory councils to provide feedback on education issues.* Oklahoma State Department of Education. Retrieved from http://sde.ok.gov/sde/newsblog/2015-11-10/superintendent-hofmeister-creates-advisory-councils-provide-feedback-education

In addition to the formation of advisory groups, some states engage representatives of various constituencies as advisors who are seated on the State Board of Education. These are frequently students, teachers, and administrators. It was noted in several interviews that distinguished educators such as the Alaska teacher of the year and principal of the year are not asked to perform state-level advisory roles on behalf of their colleagues and students. The Alaska State Board of Education includes a student advisor, but should consider others. The State Board of Education in North Carolina includes local superintendent, local board of education, principal of the year, teacher of the year, and student advisors.[66]

Recommendation 5.2.3

Incorporate input and feedback that is received from enhanced communications and advisement into planning, decision-making, policymaking, and continuous improvement processes. (Tier 1)

Effective advisory processes, along with the survey mechanisms advised in **Recommendations 5.2.2, 3.1.3, and 4.9.3**, will yield input and feedback that is instructive to DEED and to the State Board.

Some would argue that the importance of this recommendation is self-evident. However, specific instances of unresponsiveness, and comments from the November 2015 survey and from interviewees, suggest there is not consistent openness to feedback. The findings above profile the need for greater responsiveness by DEED and the State Board to feedback on problems with the Alaska Measures of Progress (AMP) assessment system. The following general comments are also instructive:

Comments from superintendents included:

- *DEED does not respond to stakeholders in a prompt effective manner. Rather, you become distractors to their actions and desires.*
- *Lately, the Department seems to have 'circled-up the wagons' when faced with criticism.*

[66] North Carolina State Board of Education. *About SBE.* https://eboard.eboardsolutions.com/AboutUs/AboutUs.aspx?S=10399&TID=1

Comments from DEED staff members reflected similar concerns:

- *Administration is very 'top-down.' There seems to be little interest in bottom-up feedback, and no mechanism in place to collect such feedback.*

- *It appears to me that when you question a practice or decision, you are deemed a 'distractor.'*

Incorporating input and feedback in the processes of planning, decision-making, and policymaking takes extra time. But that time is recovered in other ways. Reaching a group consensus takes more time and patience than making decisions in a traditional hierarchical system, but recommendations will be accepted with a remarkable spirit of trust.[67] The time and expense required to reverse the negative effects of poor decisions reached unilaterally or with little stakeholder involvement – both in public dollars and in public trust – are typically far greater than the time required for appropriately collaborative decision-making.[68]

The feedback from others, combined with meaningful data from agency processes, student and teacher performance, surveys, etc. should be integral elements of a systematic process of improvement.

Costs to implement **Recommendations 5.2.1, 5.2.2,** and **5.2.3** above related to more effective communications, advisement, and feedback are not anticipated to require additional funding. Surveys can be administered at no cost via several free online applications. DEED already has multiple data sources for performance monitoring. Engaging advisory groups via live synchronous internet platforms will eliminate or minimize travel expenses. Nominal expense reimbursements, where necessary, for additional State Board advisors will not be prohibitive.

---

[67] Kessler, R. (1992). Shared Decision-Making Works! *Educational Leadership,* 50(1). Available at: http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/sept92/vol50/num01/Shared-Decision-Making-Works!.aspx

[68] Ward, M. & MacPhail-Wilcox, B. (1999). *Delegation and empowerment: Leading with and through others.* Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.

This page intentionally left blank.

6 OBJECTIVE 8: TECHNOLOGY

Objective 8: Evaluate DEED's process for implementing technology and recommend new types or uses of technology to improve agency efficiency and effectiveness.

Overview and Summary of the Conclusion for Objective 8

Within its internal operations, DEED uses technology in a manner consistent with most state education agencies. These uses are primarily in the area of improving internal agency efficiency and communications and collecting district and school data for the purposes of federal and state reporting as well as calculating funding allocations.

For these purposes, DEED's use of technology is adequate. At the same time, there are areas where improvements should be made. These are detailed in the findings of this section.

These include such areas as:

- The use of social media (including the website) for communications with districts, schools and key stakeholders;

- The use of a portal for storing, organizing and sharing important DEED information or materials, both internally and with teachers and administrators in the schools and districts; and

- A more coherent overall data strategy for DEED that brings data together into a repository that can be managed and made available in accordance with the state's privacy and security policies while also being used to improve the quality and usefulness of data to departments and school districts.

While some of the applications used by DEED are proprietary software (such as State Report Manager, a tool used by many states) the DEED IT organization uses a predominately in-house approach to supporting applications. Of the approximately 50 applications supported by DEED IT, only six have active maintenance contracts in effect, placing a heavy reliance on DEED IT staff for the ongoing support and maintenance of the portfolio of DEED applications.

There is nothing inherently wrong with this approach, but it does make it very important to have good documentation, employee retention, and cross-training practices in place, as well as a streamlined process for hiring contract resources for peak demand times. There were no substantial findings in these areas, other than a commendation of the active cross-training effort in place. The recommendations in this area stress the importance of continuously improving in these areas, as well as recognizing the difficulty of hiring qualified IT staff given the scarcity and salary demands of local IT talent.

Lastly, while the use of technology *within* DEED is consistent with most state education agencies, some states are offering services to school districts that go far beyond what is currently in place or planned by DEED. Even in strong local control states, education agencies offer such services to districts as:

- Statewide internet and broadband services
- Instructional management systems
- Digital content libraries
- Longitudinal data systems and dashboards for teachers and administrators
- Opt-in student information systems and IEP systems

With the exception of a statewide internet and broadband contract (which should be pursued as a priority for Alaska schools and districts), the other services should not be contemplated without a clear vision and strategic plan for the state in terms of where education priorities and directions are headed. The state lacks a clear vision in its strategic plan for its innovative use of technology to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of educational opportunities and operation functions. The Public Works review team provides several recommendations to address this gap. The review team also commends the State Board for including the goal of modernizing the state's educational system in its new strategic plan goals.

6.1 OPT-IN STATEWIDE STUDENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (SIS) AND INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP) SYSTEM

Findings

DEED struggles with data quality and data variability for the collections from multiple Student Information System (SIS) and Individual Education Program (IEP) vendors in the local school districts. Poor data quality is a source of hidden costs for education agencies. These costs are in the form of duplicate data collections, redundant data stores, errors in state or federal reporting and difficulty in assessing the effectiveness/impact of programs and policies. Additionally, smaller districts pay a premium per-student cost for these systems, often as much as ten times the per-student cost as larger districts.

Districts in Alaska may select the system of their choice for tracking students and student services, as is the case in many states across the county. This results in a number of different vendors across the state, with varying quality of data and services provided to the districts by these vendors. This also causes variability in terms of the quality of data collected by DEED for state and federal reporting. Research performed in other states (e.g., the business case for Arizona's Education Learning and Accountability System (AELAS) shows that smaller districts pay a higher per student cost for necessary systems such as the student information system (SIS) and individual education program (IEP) system than the larger districts. This is due in large part to volume discounts available to the larger districts. The AELAS study for the Arizona Department of Education found that very small districts (less than 199 students) paid as much as $57.28 per student for one system, while large districts (over 20,000 students) paid as little as $5.33.

There are many states across the country that provide these types of systems (e.g., student information systems or SIS and individual education plan systems or IEP) for school districts because it provides a number of benefits:

- Saves the state money overall by reducing the costs to districts for license fees and hosting/hardware costs

- Provides a more consistent set of data elements and data definitions across the districts, which results in overall better quality data;

- Reduces the burden on districts with regard to managing vendor relations. This includes such things as negotiating contracts with vendors, ensuring that state-required data reporting changes are implemented correctly and tested by vendors, and that vendors maintain proper security and privacy controls;

- Allows the state to work with the selected vendors to streamline and improve the data reporting processes; and

- Allows the state to provide additional services to districts that are beneficial, such as linking the SIS system to a state-supported learning management system (North Carolina) and providing views of the data in meaningful dashboards (Arizona).

States that provide SIS and IEP systems include North Carolina, South Carolina, Delaware, Kentucky, Arkansas, Arizona, Utah, and Tennessee. In some of these states, participation is mandatory, and the state funds all or a major portion of the costs for the software. In other states, the districts can choose to use the state-sponsored system and pay the price themselves. The incentive for participating is a lower cost to the district from a volume discounted price negotiated by the state. (See **Recommendation 4.7.1** for further discussion of pooled purchasing.)

Additionally, in some of these states, the department of education works closely with the vendor to ease the burden to districts for state reporting. The districts, as they decide to opt in, can pay the state for the SIS and IEP licenses (and optionally hosting services). The state can in turn use those funds to support the program (this is the approach of the Arizona Department of Education).

Recommendation 6.1.1

Adopt a model similar to the Arizona opt-in system for providing a student information system and an individual education program system to local districts. (Tier 2)

Funds otherwise paid by local school districts to the vendor should be collected by DEED. Vendor selection should be highly focused on the needs of the district, with DEED facilitating a decision-making process. Final vendor selection should

be made by a steering team consisting of district representatives from a diverse mix of small and large, urban and rural districts.

Given current fiscal considerations in Alaska, the appropriate approach for such a project is one that draws funding for the implementation of the new systems from the new revenue streams provided by individual districts. The districts overall will see lower costs over time from the state-negotiated per-student rates. The costs for implementation will include:

- Internal labor costs for developing the RFP (request for proposals) and selecting a vendor (or set of vendors). Model RFP language is available from other states that have previously made such procurement contracts. This language and selection criteria can be adapted for Alaska. RFP language should specify a vendor-hosted solution, or the option for district hosting, to avoid data center and hardware costs at the state level.

- Implementation costs for a district to move from one vendor to the state-contract vendor. These will vary by district, and will involve district and or contract/vendor labor for data conversion and initial training. These costs should be negotiated in the procurement process and be included in the first-year usage fee.

- Ongoing support for hosting, maintenance and help desk are services that should be provided by the vendor and priced as part of the license costs. These are costs that are currently incurred by the districts for the systems they now use. With proper contract negotiation by DEED, these ongoing costs should be lower.

- DEED ongoing contract management, problem solving and district contact for the service should be provided on an ongoing basis.

No legislative action is required; however, legislative awareness and support will be necessary for successful implementation.

6.2 SUPPORT FOR CRITICAL DEED SYSTEMS

Findings

The Alaska Student ID System (ASIS) is copyrighted by ControlTec, and DEED does not have an ongoing business relationship with them. DEED does provide limited support to maintain the hosting environment and database. Updates and changes to the system cannot be performed due to the copyright license that governs ASIS.

Of the approximately 50 applications maintained by DEED, six have ongoing maintenance contracts with an external vendor. From this list of 50 applications, about 38 of these need work. This is a large backlog of just maintenance work and does not include a backlog of possible new systems work. Apart from six applications with support contracts in place, the work of enhancing and maintaining the code is very heavily dependent on DEED's IT staff. While there is nothing inherently wrong with an in-house development and maintenance strategy, it does require that particular attention be paid to maintaining good system documentation, following best practices for retaining key staff, and cross training to minimize the effects of turnover when it does occur. Also, for peak demand periods where work backlogs accumulate, a strategy for contracting outside resources to avoid long delays in performing work is required.

Without such practices, an in-house development approach presents costs to the state and poses additional risks. Costs are incurred by lower productivity for state or district staff that must forgo process efficiencies that would normally be coded into regularly maintained/supported systems. The risks are that new or modified state or federal reporting or procedural requirements may go unmet for an unacceptable period of time while these support issues are resolved.

It was understood from onsite interviews that hiring technology staff is difficult due to high demand, low supply, and high salaries of IT professionals in the area.

Recommendation 6.2.1

Continue to use and pursue best practices for in-house system support. (Tier 1)

There is no evidence to suggest that the practices mentioned above (e.g., maintaining good system documentation, following best practices for retaining key staff, and cross training) are deficient. In fact, several separate interviewees referenced the current practices in place around cross training. The recommendation, however, is that DEED understand the risks associated with a heavy dependence on in-house development and maintenance, and continue to support and improve the practices mentioned above.

Recommendation 6.2.2

Consider model applications in use by other states for implementation in Alaska as the need for replacing or significantly enhancing existing applications arise (Tier 1)

Software for statewide student IDs (SSID) is in place in many states across the country. Some states have acquired these systems, while others have developed the code internally. As the need for an ASIS replacement becomes necessary, consider pursuing the use of code from a state that might be willing to gift this to DEED (i.e., free of license costs). Additional applications are available from state education agencies that might be of future interest to DEED. As DEED applications are evaluated for enhancement or replacement over time, first consider available systems from other state education agencies before investing in either the purchase of new systems or in-house development. Some states are willing to share systems without licensing costs. The following states have data migration tools (some will include student unique ID management) that they are willing to share: Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, and Utah.

An ongoing staff time commitment is required for implementing, customizing and supporting another state's solutions/applications. However, this approach typically yields significant cost savings over either a purchased product or in-house development from scratch (i.e., without the benefit of starting with an existing system). Staff time is further offset by the absence of licensing or ongoing maintenance fees.

State education agencies have improved in recent years at collaborating and sharing best practices, software, intellectual property and lessons learned. Much of this occurs through the state education Chief Information Officer (CIO) Network hosted by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) that is open for DEED's IT Manager to join.

Recommendation 6.2.3

Join the Council of Chief State School Officer's Chief Information Officer Network and participate regularly in their meetings. (Tier 2)

It is recommended that the DEED IT Manager join the CCSSO's CIO Network and participate in their meetings. There is much that can be learned that is of real value to DEED and to the state of Alaska. This network is an excellent forum to learn about such cost-saving software sharing opportunities as described above in **Recommendation 6.2.2** and the best practices producing desirable results in other states.

With regard to the CIO Network costs, all states belong to CCSSO and have the option of joining (and paying fees for) other subgroups such as the Education Information Management Advisory Consortium (EIMAC), which hosts the CIO Network. The annual fee for EIMAC is very low (approximately $15,000 per year) for the CIO and two staff to attend the two general EIMAC meetings, and the CIO to attend the two separate CIO Network meetings. Travel costs (hotel and airfare) and arrangements for all four meetings are included in the fee.

No legislative action is required; however, legislative awareness and support will be necessary for successful implementation.

6.3 DISTRICT AND SCHOOL-BASED BROADBAND CONNECTION (BANDWIDTH)

Findings

Bandwidth challenges were reported by local school districts across the state; this was surprising to the review team, given that documentation on e-rate indicates that all schools should have at least a 10 MB internet connection.

"E-Rate" is the commonly used name for the Schools and Libraries Program of the Universal Service Fund, which is administered by the Universal Service

Administrative Company (USAC) under the direction of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The program provides discounts to assist schools and libraries in the United States to obtain affordable telecommunications and internet access.

There is little question that the future of education is in the realm of digital learning and/or technology-enhanced instructional content and delivery. Bandwidth to schools, classrooms and district offices as well as to the homes of students/parents is essential in order for Alaska to pursue any vision (long or short-term) for education that embraces technology. The bandwidth needs of schools and districts will continue to grow with the ongoing move to digital learning and could become a primary impediment to the state's desire to embrace technology in the classroom.

Bandwidth needs vary by school and district, depending on such factors as the amount of internet usage, digital curriculum, online courses, network design, whether or not a cruise ship is in port or not, etc. A minimum internet bandwidth guideline is 100 Kbps per student for schools that are moderate bandwidth users of internet services and classroom digital tools.[69] More advanced media-rich schools might require as much as 1+ MB per student. Smaller districts do not have the resources, skills, and tools needed to effectively monitor and manage network bandwidth utilization and performance issues.

Some states (such as North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama, Georgia, and others) provide broadband internet connections for all districts, using e-rate funds to support the cost for the delivery of broadband internet access service. This volume purchasing allows for equity in internet access across the state, advantages of volume pricing, broader availability of internet bandwidth options based on planned and changing school/district needs and opportunity for improved network monitoring, management and support through enforceable service level agreements (SLA).

The services offered by Libraries, Archives, and Museums (LAM) around broadband have been well-received assistance to districts and have taken Alaska a great distance toward improving accessibility. However, numerous

[69] Network Essentials for Superintendents. State Education Technology Directors Association (SETDA).

discussions with district representatives indicate that districts do not have the bandwidth they currently need for classroom instruction and online assessment. The small and more remote districts in particular pay a premium cost on a per student basis for connectivity. District superintendents also reported that the planned reduction in the state budget for broadband would pose a negative financial impact to them, as they will be required to locate funds to cover the cost of just remaining status-quo for their bandwidth to schools and classrooms.

For school districts that have a vision to enhance teaching and learning with technology, maintaining the status quo with regard to bandwidth is not an option. For example, the virtual presence robots, such as the ones used in the Kodiak Island Borough School District, employ small, motorized stands with a tablet device for real-time video interaction among educators and between educators and students. Such a program is not possible or expandable without bandwidth availability and scalability.

As districts move at their own pace into the world of digital instruction, blended learning, and online courses, bandwidth needs will continue to increase, as will the costs to districts. Additionally, connectivity inside of schools is increasingly becoming wireless. Recent e-rate changes reflect and support this movement. Schools and administrative offices need to be appropriately configured to support wireless devices.

The future of education rests in the digital age. Already, leading states (Florida and North Carolina) and school districts are moving from textbook-based teaching and learning to embrace digital content and online learning. The most advanced districts are already pursuing personalized, competency-based learning, which is heavily reliant on digital content and delivery. States and districts that do not already have plans and strategies for moving in these directions are already at risk of falling behind. A robust, reliable, and scalable broadband network is a critical infrastructure component required to support such a future for education. Without adequate broadband connectivity for schools and districts in Alaska, there can be no viable vision for a future that includes substantive technology-enhanced learning. If districts are left to their own contract negotiating leverages and technical competency to secure such critical infrastructure, then the future of technology-enhanced learning in Alaska is at risk.

Recommendation 6.3.1

Serve as a change agent or catalyst for the establishment of statewide strategies and services for increasing the wireless, wide area network, and broadband internet connectivity services to school districts. (Tier 1)

At a minimum, DEED should offer training on broadband options, how to plan for and acquire wireless and broadband networks, contract terms/negotiations, service level agreements, and network monitoring/management, as well as continuing to offer e-rate assistance.

There can be no credible statewide vision for increased technology in the classroom unless the issues surrounding bandwidth for current and future needs can be systemically addressed. Bandwidth is an essential component of the infrastructure required for technology in the schools and classrooms. A stronger approach for addressing this broadband issue is a statewide broadband contract and district opt-in consortium approach for obtaining the required network services. This could include a new e-rate modernization offering opportunities for dark fiber and lit fiber services as a least-cost option to obtain the needed services.

DEED should advocate for a statewide strategy, leveraging e-rate to support districts and schools to meet in FY 2018/19 a baseline minimum for mobility support for a wireless network of one (1) 802.11ac capable access point per classroom, non-shared wireless backhaul network to the district internet access point and broadband internet bandwidth to support a minimum 100Kbps per student.

The costs associated with a statewide broadband service are beyond the scope of this study to estimate; the distance, remoteness and climate conditions of Alaska limit the value of estimates from other states. Nevertheless, there is the potential for tremendous savings through a statewide contract. Per-student costs for internet connectivity for the small, rural districts range as high as $1,000,000 or more annually for 300 students. An effort in North Carolina by a state-supported non-profit organization (MCNC) procured internet access for all NC schools at a savings of 60 percent over retail rates. Other states, such as South Carolina, have negotiated internet connectivity contracts that provide services such as network performance monitoring and on-demand bandwidth increases at rates not available to individual school districts.

No legislative action is required; however legislative awareness and support will be necessary for successful implementation.

6.4 TECHNOLOGY-ENHANCED COMMUNICATIONS

Findings

The DEED website is difficult to navigate, according to interviews of DEED staff, district staff, and outside partnering organizations, and confirmed by the Public Works team's review of the site. The DEED website structure could be improved for ease of navigation and viewing by its key constituents, including students, parents, educators, administrators, and the community. Other state websites are designed for this purpose.

Examples of websites from New Mexico and Arizona departments of education show an arrangement where the top-level navigation is targeted directly to these audiences. Conversely, on the Alaska site there is a mix of divisions (but not all divisions) and key constituents (but not all constituents) at the high-level navigation bar. The Arizona and New Mexico sites also have additional features such as comprehensive A to Z directories, complete division listings (the Alaska site is missing information on the Administrative Services Division), dynamic images and announcements. Additionally, while DEED has a Facebook presence with current timeline entries, there is no readily apparent reference to Facebook or Twitter on DEED's website that would refer viewers to this additional source of information.

The results of the review team's site visits to schools and districts, as well as of surveys administered to DEED and district superintendents, indicate that DEED's stakeholders are often unaware of important information such as DEED's mission, goals, strategic plan, services offered to districts and schools, and who to contact for such services. Active and timely communication of such information needs to be an ongoing focus throughout the department; such communications can be enhanced through effective use of IT tools.

Recommendation 6.4.1

Update and enhance DEED's website, and establish a process and accountability system for ensuring that information on the site is kept current and relevant by each division within DEED. (Tier 2)

The effectiveness of DEED's services and communications to districts is diminished if they are not easy to access and find on the agency's website. It is recognized that the state Department of Administration (DOA) office places restrictions on the use and design of websites and other social media, and these can limit creativity in certain areas. However, an agency website can be well-structured and organized while conforming to these guidelines. A website that meets these criteria is a key component of effective service provision.

Implementation of this recommendation can be accomplished at minimal cost by current DEED staff with existing resources. A review of other state education department sites will provide ideas and insights on how the leading sites structure the navigation and organization of information. Website content updates and development should be delegated amongst the relevant divisions within DEED; this will reduce the overall burden on any one division of updating and maintaining the site. Furthermore, a system of accountability should be established for keeping website information current and relevant.

6.5 STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION

Findings

The state's strategic plan contains a strategic priority to *modernize the state's educational system*. However, the contents of the plan are vague, with few specifics as to how this will be accomplished and the role that DEED will play in this effort. (See **Recommendation 1.3.1** for additional strategic planning recommendations.)

Nationwide (and globally), educational technology is reshaping teaching and learning. Some states (Florida) are moving away from textbooks and requiring the adoption of digital content aligned to state standards. Other states (e.g., Kentucky and North Carolina) have rolled out comprehensive Learning Management Systems (LMS) complete with digital content aligned to state standards and online formative assessments. Forward-thinking districts (notable

examples including Lake County, Florida and Fulton County, Georgia) are pursuing personalized learning and competency-based progression. States in the northeast (Maine, New Hampshire) are actively supportive of district efforts to enact competency-based progression.

Many Alaska school districts are embracing and moving forward with technology enhanced learning without the benefit of state support. However, for most small to medium sized districts, this is a very heavy lift. Access to the expertise and resources needed to research and adopt best practices and purchase systems and digital content are not within the reach of most of these districts. Furthermore, the education technology coordination from DEED that districts had in the past is no longer available to help districts wrestle with the difficult questions and decisions related to technology in the classroom. Without a clear plan and credible support, these districts will continue to lag behind the rest of the country in the adoption of 21st century technology-enhanced teaching and learning practices. Such a plan needs to address a number of very important issues facing the state, specifically:

1. How to provide the necessary bandwidth to all students in Alaska to allow technology-enhanced learning to occur.

2. How to select, vet, align, and tag digital resources that meet the needs of *all* students in the state.

3. How to raise the skill level of teachers and administrators in the area of technology-enhanced learning.

4. How to appropriately use the information that is available to teachers to individualize instruction for students.

5. How to remove barriers to competency-based progression so that each student progresses at his/her own pace.

6. How to provide data systems, dashboards, content libraries and vetted and aligned content for all districts at costs that can be afforded.

7. How to ensure that content and systems are inclusive of the unique needs of the native population.

8. How to provide guidance in the form of education technology staff (from DEED or other areas/organizations) to help all districts implement the technology directions.

These issues and many others should become a priority for the state to systemically address in order to prevent the education system from becoming irretrievably behind in this very important area.

Recommendation 6.5.1

Solicit expertise (particularly from within the state, as well as nationally) to set a clear and comprehensive path forward for technology in Alaska's education system, clarify the role that DEED and other state departments play, and align the state budget with organizational responsibilities to ensure the plan is implemented. (Tier 1)

Funds should be allocated to hire facilitators and expertise to develop an education technology strategic plan. Such an effort will require between $100,000 and $350,000 to develop a plan that is sufficient in detail and adoption/buy-in to meet the needs of all constituents.

Without such a strategic plan, and clarity around the roles that the state and districts should play as technology becomes more of an integral component of teaching and learning, there will be numerous opportunities for missing out on economies of scale in purchases of systems (learning management systems), digital content, dashboards and data warehouses. As districts advance in their digital journey without a coordinated, planned effort at the state level, each of these types of acquisitions will be made individually. Costs to the districts will be higher without volume contract agreements. Additionally, each of these systems will be implemented individually, without the opportunity to share lessons learned and implementation strategies. Costs from poor or failed implementations will also be higher as districts pursue these individually.

No legislative action is required; however legislative awareness and support will be necessary for successful implementation of this recommendation.

6.6 COMPREHENSIVE DATA STRATEGY (ARCHITECTURE)

Findings

Student and teacher data are currently stored in multiple data stores across the department and there is no place in DEED where such data comes together in one common, shared data store.

Many state education departments have implemented a data warehouse or operational data store into which data from various sources come together and are made available in a dashboard to stakeholders and districts/schools using a role-based security model. Delaware, Arizona, and Georgia are good examples of such a resource. Many of these data warehouses were funded with federal grants. Alaska did receive an earlier grant, known as the UNITY project, for a longitudinal data warehouse for DEED K-12 data. The State Report Manager system was a result of that grant. A data warehouse was also developed, but has not been fully utilized at this point.

Data warehouse systems have also been used in other states to improve the quality and accuracy of data within the department and to further provide services to school districts. Such systems are in place in states that also have strong local control policies and practices. Arizona's Department of Education is such a state. Their data warehouse is used to create dashboards and reports that are available to the districts and schools, and are well received and used by teachers and administrators to monitor student achievement and program effectiveness.

DEED should have a comprehensive strategy for data management and an accompanying data architecture that includes the use of such a data warehouse to bring data together in one place so that it can be managed in accordance with the privacy and security policies of the state and further provide support to districts and schools. Such a data strategy should consider the use of data warehouse systems available from other states as well as from the Dell Foundation (called the Ed-Fi Alliance). These systems are available license free. The Ed-Fi Alliance approach has established a collaborative community of states and districts. Users of the Ed-Fi code base are actively sharing the improvements/additions they make and reducing their costs for developing and maintaining such systems.

Additionally, such a data strategy and its accompanying architecture should be solidly predicated upon a coherent state strategy regarding the use of technology and information to guide and enhance policy, practice and programs as well as teaching and learning.

Recommendation 6.6.1

Establish a data management strategy (and accompanying architecture) for DEED that brings the data together into a repository that can be managed and made available in accordance with the state's privacy and security policies, while also being used to improve the data's quality and usefulness to DEED and local school districts. (Tier 2)

Accompanying data architecture should address the role that important DEED systems play (e.g., State Reporting Manager) in the overall collection, use and reporting of data and the role of systems of record. Predicate this data strategy and architecture upon a clearly articulated set of state strategies regarding the use of technology in education for Alaska.

Examples of such data strategies and architectures are available from other state agencies (such as Arizona, Georgia, and Delaware). Membership in the Chief Information Officer (CIO) Network through the Council of Chief State Officers (CCSSO) will provide easy access to such resources from other states (see related recommendation on this subject). Systems that comprise such architectures are available from other states or non-profits such as the Ed-Fi Alliance. The licenses are typically free, although there are labor and hardware costs involved to implement such systems.

An excellent precedent for using another state's data warehouse was set by the Rhode Island Department of Education, in the use of Georgia's system. They were able to implement the system in a very timely manner, with the use of consultants that aided in the transfer. The cost of their implementation was $600,000 to $700,000. Since implementation they have added a great deal more functionality onto this platform, including:

- Teacher resource library;
- Communities (learning management system that interacts with all modules);
- Local assessment uploads;

- Early warning system;
- Public reporting;
- Ad Hoc reporting tool; and
- State assessments.

Additionally, the following tools are currently under development:

- Interim assessments;
- Pre-K special education module; and
- Teacher toolbox.

No legislative action is required to implement this recommendation.

6.7 STATE REPORT MANAGER (SRM):

Findings

Data collection from districts and schools is an important process for DEED, as it is for all state education agencies. Data collected is used to meet state and federal reporting requirements, as well as for determining funding allocations to districts and schools. Therefore, it is vital that data is accurate, and available to be collected in a timely manner. Data collections from districts and schools should be efficient to minimize the amount of effort required of the district staff. This requirement for efficiency includes the need for ensuring that there are no duplicate data collections or requests from DEED to the districts. DEED contracts with a firm to allow for the use of the proprietary software called the State Report Manager (SRM). SRM is a tool used for improving certain portions of the data collections from the districts. The SRM is a tool used by many states for this purpose, and has improved the quality of the Alaska data collections.

Commendation 6.A

DEED is commended for consolidating selected data collections using the state report manager, reducing duplicate data requests and the burden on the districts for reporting data to the state.

Recommendation 6.7.1

Continue to consolidate data collections under the state report manager and to look for redundancies in data collections from districts and schools. (Tier 3)

There is no identified fiscal impact, other than minimal staff time involved in coordination and collaboration among the DEED divisions. No additional funding is required for implementation.

6.8 PORTAL STRATEGY

Findings

Portals for different groups and units within DEED to share resources, templates, reports, upcoming events, and to support collaboration and communication among districts are not as prevalent or useful as they could be.

Districts benefit from easy access to the tools, templates announcements, etc. from the state department groups from whom they draw direction and support. Additionally, districts benefit from having a portal and process for sharing ideas, resources, instructional content and practices in a professional learning community. Such external portals are routinely used by states to grant professional staff access to resources. Tools that the department currently uses, such as SharePoint, are commonly used for this purpose. Often these portals are combined with a secure, role-based access method. Many states use such portals and have indicated their willingness to share them with other states. These states include Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Kansas, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Maryland, Michigan, North Carolina, North Dakota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, and Washington.

These portals should be designed such that the designated staff can routinely update the materials and resources made available without external IT assistance so that IT staff do not become overly burdened – and thus delinquent in ensuring timely updates.

Recommendation 6.8.1

Establish a portal (using SharePoint or another appropriate tool) that DEED can use to create an online presence and train staff to maintain the portals and manage the content. (Tier 2)

DEED has licenses for SharePoint as well as the hardware to support it. Also, portal resources from other states can lessen the labor impact to implement such a system for Alaska. DEED IT staff time will be required to set up these systems and

provide ongoing technical support. This will require between one-half and one full-time equivalent person.

6.9 OFFICE 365 INITIATIVE

Findings

DEED is currently considering the opportunity to offer volume savings for additional services that could be offered to schools – including e-mail, web hosting, document management, network security, content filtering, and identity management/directory services. These services could all be offered to districts at significantly reduced costs. Schools can obtain services such as Microsoft 365 for education or Google Apps for education for free. These services offer e-mail, web hosting, and document management, and have proven for many school districts to have significant cost savings through lower total cost of ownership as well as service improvements. The main challenge for many districts will be to manage the migration from their existing service to the new service. However, there are many vendors available to provide migration services.

Commendation 6.B

DEED is commended for identifying the opportunity to provide services such as Microsoft 365 for Education to the districts and schools in Alaska, as well as for appropriately studying the cost savings and practical implications of such an initiative.

Recommendation 6.9.1

Continue to complete the assessment of the political, cost, and technical issues related to providing services such as Microsoft 365 for Education to districts and schools in Alaska. (Tier 2)

No additional fiscal impact is anticipated beyond what is currently allocated for this purpose; however, the implementation of this recommendation should yield long-term savings for the state.

6.10 TOPIC: DATA CENTER CONSOLIDATION AND DISASTER RECOVERY RECIPROCITY

Findings

Properly designed, secured, and managed data centers are very complex and expensive operations to maintain. A trend in IT has been to consolidate and/or move data center and server operations to cloud computing in order to minimize costs and ensure all servers are properly managed and secured. Many IT shops are moving to leased cage/rack space at a qualified data center and/or cloud computing to supplement and minimize (or eliminate) the need to maintain an expensive data center. This is an important strategy for DEED, an organization whose core competency is IT, to consider.

DEED has been working to consolidate servers into two main data centers – one in the DEED offices and one in the new Library, Archives and Media (LAM) center. They have also been working on organizing the wiring and data center layout for the DEED data center. Each center is properly conditioned (e.g., heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC), conditioned power and uninterruptable power supply), physically secured, and backed up. Additionally, there is a disaster recovery plan where each center serves as the disaster recovery center for the other. Reciprocity is a good practice and demonstrates effective cooperation and a continuous effort to reduce costs, while increasing security and efficiency of operations.

Commendation 6.C

DEED is commended for its approach of working collaboratively on a strategy of data center reciprocity.

Recommendation 6.10.1

Continue to consolidate servers in DEED and work to organize the wiring and data center layout. (Tier 2)

No additional funding is required over what is currently allocated.

In the long-term, DEED should carefully consider the return on investment of continued maintenance of a private data center vs. leasing cage/rack space at a qualified data center, or moving applications to a cloud-based environment.

This page intentionally left blank.

6.11 PULL PLANNING PROCESS IN THE LIBRARIES, ARCHIVES, AND MUSEUMS DIVISION (LAM)

Findings

The Libraries, Archives, and Museums (LAM) division of DEED uses a Lean[70] methodology called Pull Planning[71] for coordinating the work involved in managing and starting up their new facility. This methodology is useful for ensuring timely coordination and communication across different parts of the organization as well as rapid identification and resolution of issues for such a large project. Such methods are very helpful for ensuring the smooth and on-budget implementation of major projects or initiatives. Some state and local education agencies (LEAs) have adopted similar practices, such as a project management office (PMO) or the Education Delivery Institute's "Deliverology." Large, costly, and risky state-level initiatives – such as the rollout of a new assessment system – benefit from the discipline and rigor of such methodologies. Such best project management practices do not appear to applied consistently within DEED.

Commendation 6.D

The Pull Planning Process (Lean methodology) used by the Division of Libraries Archives and Museums (LAM) for their new facility project is a sound practice for team communications, project management and issue resolution. This methodology has practical application for any major DEED project.

Recommendation 6.11.1

Adopt a project management methodology such as Pull Planning, Project Management Office, or Deliverology to be used consistently across DEED for future major initiatives. (Tier 2)

No additional fiscal impact is anticipated. Indirect cost savings are likely to be achieved through efficiency and avoidance of the costs and risks associated with poor or unsuccessful project implementation, and particularly the implementation of those projects involving technology.

---

[70] http://www.lean.org/WhatsLean/
[71] http://www.leanproject.com/what-we-do/key-components/lean-tools-techniques/pull-planning/

This page intentionally left blank.

7 OBJECTIVE 9: CONSOLIDATIONS OR REDUCTIONS

Objective 9: Identify agencies that could be terminated/consolidated, cost reductions, and potential programs and cost reductions.

Overview and Summary of the Conclusion for Objective 9

Public Works found a key area where the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) could consolidate offices to yield cost reductions. The review team recommends that DEED eliminate duplication of work processes between DEED, the Professional Teaching Practices Commission (PTPC), and the University of Alaska's teacher preparation programs; and amend Article 5 of the Alaska Statutes, Professional Teaching Practices Act to consolidate the PTPC's work into the Teacher Certification Office's work. Fiscal implications of consolidation are described at the end of this chapter, below **Recommendations 7.1.1, 7.1.2, and 7.1.3.**

7.1 CONSOLIDATION OF PROFESSIONAL TEACHING PRACTICES COMMISSION (PTPC)

Findings

There are inefficiencies and some duplication of effort in the management of educator licensing responsibilities between the PTPC and DEED's Teacher Certification Office. Examples are noted in the following paragraphs. The PTPC duplicates some services of the University of Alaska's teacher education programs, such as providing professional ethics training to candidates for graduation from these programs. These inefficiencies and duplications of effort generate unnecessary personnel time, travel, and facilities expenses.

State education agencies and/or state boards of education are responsible for issuing educator credentials in the form of a professional certificate or license. States routinely have statutory and regulatory mechanisms for reviewing allegations of educator misconduct and for taking actions that may include suspension or revocation of a certificate. The PTPC is a semi-autonomous entity that serves this function for the State of Alaska and for DEED.[72]

[72]AS Title 14, Chapter 20, Article 5. Professional Teaching Practices Act.

Multiple interviewees report that, while there is a generally smooth flow of work processes between the PTPC and DEED's Teacher Certification Office, there are instances of unnecessary procedures on the part of the PTPC that could and should be addressed by DEED. For example, both the commissioner of education and the executive director of the PTPC can initiate license revocation proceedings. Denial of a license by DEED can be appealed to the PTPC, which can overrule the commissioner. This process is acknowledged by a key agency leader as unusual; this individual further reported that the shifting between the agencies of responsibilities related to sanctioning licenses and reporting such sanctions is duplication of effort. If the DEED Office of Teacher Certification determines from the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) clearinghouse that an educator's certificate has been sanctioned in another state, the office upholds the sanction in Alaska. The application is automatically referred to the PTPC office for investigation and adjudication. The PTPC's action is final, rather than advisory to the certificate-issuing entity, which is DEED. It would streamline the process for DEED to take original sanction action, and for the State Board to make the final decision on a challenged sanction.

As noted above, DEED does not make the final determination when a certification candidate challenges a sanction; the PTPC does this. However, DEED is then responsible for reporting those sanctions against certificates to NASDTEC.

It is an inefficient division of responsibility for the PTPC to make final rulings on sanctions against education licenses, while DEED is responsible for the required public reporting on these rulings. There is occasionally excessive lag time and there are occasional errors in the reporting of these sanctions as this information moves between the PTPC and DEED's Teacher Certification Office.

The PTPC provides information about professional standards, and the director frequently meets with pre-service educators to explain the ethical requirements of the profession and the responsibilities and practices of the PTPC. Teacher education programs also address information and training on ethics in professional practice.

Nothing in this finding should be construed to suggest that there should not be a stringent system for addressing educator misconduct. Educators should be held

to high standards of professional and ethical conduct. When educators violate these standards, they should be held accountable, and if found guilty of such violations, should be subject to appropriate sanctions related to their professional certificates. Similarly, educators who are erroneously charged with ethical misconduct are entitled to a fair and due process through which they may be exonerated. These processes should flow smoothly, effectively, and efficiently.

DEED addresses educator misconduct through a system that is unnecessarily expensive and elaborate given the relatively small population of educators, and the significant fiscal challenges faced by the state. Other states manage these processes in a more efficient, yet effective manner.

Recommendation 7.1.1

Eliminate duplication of work processes by the Professional Teaching Practices Commission (PTPC) and university teacher preparation programs, and by PTPC and DEED. (Tier 1)

The responsibility for providing pre-service educators with information on professional ethics should be assigned to and carried out by university programs of preparation. University programs of educator preparation should orient candidates to codes of conduct and ethical practice.

If this recommendation is implemented, both the time and travel associated with the PTPC director's meetings with educator candidates to explain such provisions can be reduced. Key entities report that the director spends "a lot" of time on this process. The executive director's position and time represent an expenditure of state resources that should not be necessary if the educator preparation programs uniformly and effectively manage this responsibility.

If the recommendation is not implemented, then the director should ensure that preparation program faculty and certification liaisons are properly oriented to educator standards and to any related changes (rather than provide direct orientation to educator candidates.) To do so, the PTPC director can deliver a trainer-of-trainers model and a system of electronically communicated updates. Such a process is less expensive than direct provision of such content to educator candidates by the director.

Recommendation 7.1.2

Amend AS 14.20.370-510 Professional Teaching Practices Act to consolidate the work of the Professional Teaching Practices Commission into the Teacher Certification Office's work. (Tier 2)

DEED addresses educator misconduct through a system that is unnecessarily expensive and elaborate given the relatively small population of educators and the significant fiscal challenges faced by the state. The review team acknowledges that a proactive and effective process for addressing educator misconduct is essential. Other states manage these processes in a more efficient, yet effective manner. A number of states have elected to manage these processes within the state education agency, and do so effectively. A full-time administrator role need not be dedicated to dealing with educator misconduct. Other states with significantly larger educator populations effectively manage these processes with a smaller commitment of professional positions.

Given the inefficiencies of information flow, work processes, and divided reporting responsibilities, the state should consolidate the responsibilities for managing certificate sanctions into DEED's Teacher Certification Office. As noted above in **Recommendation 7.1.1**, the responsibility for providing pre-service educators with information on professional ethics should be assigned to and carried out by university programs of preparation.

Further given the costs of maintaining separate facilities and support staff for PTPC, consolidation of the PTPC into DEED's Teacher Certification Office will save funding currently expended for a support staff position and PTPC facilities. An assistant state attorney general currently manages the legal work for the PTPC, and this need not be altered by these recommendations. Reductions in the work responsibilities of the director, noted above in **Recommendation 7.1.1** should allow for these responsibilities to be managed by a part-time administrator, and should further result in reduced time and travel costs for this administrator.

Recommendation 7.1.3

Amend AS 14.20.370-510 such that the PTPC is advisory to the State Board of Education, rather than an entity that renders final administrative decisions in matters of certificate sanctions for educator misconduct. (Tier 2)

The current line of authority for sanctioning certificates bypasses the entity charged with setting standards for educator preparation, practice, and conduct. This creates an unnecessary procedural step, presumes that the entity making the decision is not objective, and, in the case of the Alaska PTPC and DEED, creates duplication of effort across multiple agencies. Boards are deemed to be legitimate tribunals for such matters. By making the PTPC advisory to the State Board of Education in matters related to sanctions against educator certificates, legal challenges related to the full process of certificate administration would be managed more efficiently in one unit.

State education agencies elsewhere offer models that reflect the structures and processes encompassed in the recommendations above. For example, the state of North Carolina:

- Assigns responsibility for sanctions against educator licenses to the North Carolina State Board of Education;
- Engages an advisory committee of teachers and administrators to review and make recommendations to the State Board about cases involving certificate sanctions; and
- Manages the work through an assistant attorney general and staff attorney who will commit a portion of their time to this work.

According to DEED, PTPC is funded by receipts; consolidation of the process management for sanctioning educator credentials through DEED should not impact eligibility for any federal funding. It is anticipated that implementation of **Recommendations 7.1.1, 7.1.2, and 7.1.3** will save a minimum of $100,000 in the state's general fund. The current total position cost for the PTPC secretary is $74,918, all of which would be saved if these recommendations were implemented. The director's total position cost is $145,403. Even a partial reduction to ¾ position status would result in approximately $30,000 savings. Additional savings can be achieved through additional components of the

recommendations outlined above (e.g., the elimination of a separate facility for the PTPC and reduced travel costs for the director).

The PTPC is funded through certification fees collected by the state to help defray the costs associated with educator credentialing. Among these costs are those associated with sanctions against educator credentials. The state should continue to collect these fees since, under the recommendation, the sanctioning process would continue within DEED, and through the Alaska State Board of Education.

The review team notes that the investigative role should not be duplicated through the implementation of this recommendation. Under both current practice and under the recommendation, an investigation occurs, and a body (whether the PTPC or the State Board of Education) acts. The processing of sanctions within the same agency (DEED) is expected to be more efficient than the current flow of work back and forth between two agencies –where leaders acknowledge that duplication of effort exists. Under the current process, the automatic investigation and adjudication of any application puts PTPC in the position of reviewing every denial by DEED. Under the recommended system, DEED staff would execute the denial, the system can transition to one in which only those denials that are appealed are adjudicated. The state board, with a recommendation from an advisory committee of practitioners (a streamlined PTPC composed of practitioners), is already part of the agency responsible for these processes. In personnel matters, a board can serve as an impartial tribunal.

8 OBJECTIVE 11: CAPITAL PROJECTS

Objective 11: Evaluate the agency's process for developing capital projects.

Overview and Summary of the Conclusion for Objective 11

The process the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) uses to review capital projects is systematic and effective at incorporating a variety of criteria provided by the legislature into its project evaluation and priority ranking system. Additionally, the application requirements DEED imposes on districts encourage districts to follow best practices for the capital programs.

Overall, the review team found that DEED has a robust process for reviewing capital projects. However, there is a perception among some superintendents that the process is cumbersome and expensive. Although DEED's Grant Committee review worked to improve the grant review process in 2012, additional revisions could be made to make the application process less cumbersome and scoring more straightforward.

Furthermore, Alaska Statutes require that local school districts maintain adequate preventive maintenance plans and operations in order to be eligible for state school construction and major maintenance grant and debt reimbursement programs. DEED provides limited resources to local districts to assist with preventive maintenance planning. DEED does not currently provide local districts with preventative maintenance best practices nor share "frequently-asked questions" or other information that could help districts with limited maintenance resources. In summary, the review team concluded that DEED's process for developing capital projects is effective at achieving its legislative purpose; however, the application process is unnecessarily cumbersome, and the scoring of some projects can be confusing to districts. The review team found that DEED provides limited resources for districts to assist with preventative maintenance planning. For these reasons, the team finds that DEED is only partially fulfilling its responsibilities of providing a quality process for developing capital improvement projects.

8.1 CAPITAL PROJECTS REVIEW PROCESS

Findings

The process DEED uses to review capital projects is systematic and effective at incorporating a variety of criteria provided by the legislature into its project evaluation and priority ranking system. Additionally, the application requirements DEED imposes on districts encourage districts to follow best practices for the capital programs. In 2012, DEED's Grant Committee Review worked to improve the grant review process by increasing transparency, better aligning the review process with statutes and regulations, and simplifying the process. However, despite these improvements, superintendents were nearly evenly split in their opinion as to whether the process is fair and efficient.

To clarify the terms of this objective, DEED does not typically "develop" capital projects per se; DEED reviews district requests for state funding for capital projects, and creates a prioritized list of projects to be funded. For Objective 11, the review team was asked to review four specific elements relating to the effectiveness of DEED's processes for evaluating capital projects:

1. The extent to which a formal process exists for developing capital projects including, but not limited to, school construction projects, and if a process exists;

2. Whether the department has followed the process when implementing recent capital projects. If a formal process exists;

3. Whether the process is within the department's control or has been developed in response to federal or other guidelines outside of the department's control; and

4. Level of public involvement in the process.

Each of these four elements is discussed below, followed by discussions of overall effectiveness of the DEED's process for reviewing and prioritizing capital project proposals, and other issues related to the process.

a) **Does a formal process exist?** Yes. There are formal eligibility criteria, application requirements, and forms for both types of capital funding:

grants and debt reimbursement. For grant funding, once districts submit their requests, DEED's three-person team evaluates them based on set scoring criteria. The results of the evaluation are used to score and rank all capital project requests submitted. The ranked projects are placed on one of two lists: a major maintenance list or a construction list. These lists are forwarded to the governor and the legislature; according to statute, projects are funded in rank order as far down the list as legislative appropriations allow. There are typically many more requests than there are funding.

The application, eligibility, and review process for debt reimbursements are similar to those for grant applications. However, according to staff, for the last 10 to 20 years there has been no limit to debt reimbursement participation. In other words, all debt reimbursement requests have been funded. In 2015, legislation temporarily halted the debt reimbursement program, so no new projects will be funded from 2015 to 2020.

b) **Does DEED follow the process?** Yes. Documents and interviews with both DEED staff and superintendents indicate that the process is followed.

c) **Is the process in DEED's control?** No. Alaska Statute 14.11 creates a largely prescriptive process for DEED's use in evaluating capital funding requests. These requirements originated with the legislature, as there are no federal requirements pertaining to state school capital funding.

d) **How much public involvement is there in the process?** Public involvement is variable. There are no state statutory requirements for school districts to involve the public in their decision-making processes. As a result, public input at the local level varies by district. Under AS 14.11.013, DEED is required to provide public notice of grant applications submissions in newspaper of general circulation and to every person who has requested notice; at a later date, it is also required to hold a public meeting about the project priority list it develops.

To assess the effectiveness of DEED's system for evaluating and prioritizing capital funding requests, one must understand the legislative intent of the program. This is essential to determine whether DEED is successful in accomplishing it. The primary statute governing state funding for capital projects in schools is AS 14.11.

This statute creates the funds from which grants and debt reimbursement payments may be made, outlines how the local share of funding should be calculated, and provides criteria for DEED to use when evaluating funding applications. No explicit legislative intent is given, however the criteria provided are evidence that the legislature wanted DEED to consider factors such as:

- Need, taking into consideration factors such as the number of un-housed students, health and safety issues, and the physical conditions of existing buildings;

- Whether the districts are conducting long-term capital asset planning; and

- Whether the districts have conducted preliminary work (such as plan development and cost estimates) for the project in question.

DEED's capital funding eligibility requirements require documentation of all of the above elements, and they are factored into the scores used to prioritize projects across the state. Therefore, we conclude that the program is effective at achieving its legislative purpose.

Commendation 8.A

DEED is commended for developing an effective process for the evaluation and prioritization of capital projects that incorporates all legislative requirements.

8.2 PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

Findings

DEED's capital project review and prioritization process and its project agreements, incentivize school districts to utilize best practices in their capital improvement projects and planning.

In evaluating program effectiveness, we consulted best practices for government capital project management. The sources that addressed state

programs focused on state-owned buildings and thus were not applicable.[73,74] However, a study funded by the World Bank Group identified best practices for a capital improvement program for use by the Washington, DC school district.[75] The findings in this report can be used to determine if DEED's capital project funding eligibility requirements encourage the districts to implement best practices in their own capital project planning.

The World Bank study reviewed the capital improvement programs and practices of seven school districts considered leaders in the field. The study found that all well-managed school district capital improvement programs consist of six basic elements:

- Accurate information systems;
- Comprehensive, multifaceted planning;
- Needs based decision-making process;
- Sufficient and stable funding;
- Skilled project management; and
- Effective oversight and monitoring.

DEED's requirements encourage districts to meet the first two best practices listed: accurate information services and comprehensive, multifaceted planning. To have accurate information services, districts must maintain information about their building assets, including condition, capacity, utilization, and expenses. DEED requires districts to have a functioning fixed asset inventory system (FAIS) that is verified on-site in conjunction with DEED's periodic district performance maintenance review. A multifaceted planning system should include a long-range facilities master plan (DEED requires districts to have a six-year capital improvement plan); a capital improvement plan detailing the costs of future

---

[73] *Executive Guide: Leading Practices in Capital Decision-Making.* U.S. General Accounting Office, December 1998. Web. http://www.gao.gov/special.pubs/ai99032.pdf Accessed February 19, 2016.

[74] *Capital Budgeting in the States.* National Association of State Budget Officers, Spring 2014. Web. http://www.nasbo.org/capital-budgeting-in-the-states Accessed February 19, 2016.

[75] *Public School Capital Improvement Programs: Basic Elements and Best Practices: Guidance for the District of Columbia.* The Scientex Corporation and The 21st Century School Fund for the World Bank Group, July 1999. Web. http://www.21csf.org/csf-home/publications/publicschools/PublicSchoolCapitalImprovementPrograms.pdf Accessed February 19, 2016.

projects (DEED requires cost estimates with the applications); and an annual maintenance plan (another DEED requirement).

The third best practice, a needs based decision-making process, includes having mechanisms for public input; developing processes for creating a project list, updating it, regularly, and approving things on it; and articulating the public benefits of projects. DEED's requirements do not address the capital projects development process undertaking by districts.

The fourth best practice is having sufficient and stable funding. For grant-funded projects, DEED enters into a project agreement with the district that confirms the scope and budget of the project and outlines a payment schedule that is tied to the completion of specified milestones. Similar contracts are made with districts receiving debt forgiveness. Therefore, the structure of the payment system does provide sufficient and stable funding for projects for which districts are receiving state funds.

The fifth and sixth best practices - skilled project management and effective oversight and monitoring - are closely related. Both require project teams that can effectively plan and oversee the project from conception through to completion. Good project management results in projects being completed on schedule and within budget. Effective monitoring and oversight require routine document of progress to the management team for review and oversight purposes. Although DEED does not specifically review these elements, the progress requirements in the project agreement provide incentives to districts to effectively manage capital projects.

Commendation 8.B

DEED is commended for developing a capital project review and prioritization process, and project agreements, that incentivize school districts to utilize best practices in their capital improvement projects and planning.

8.3 PROJECT APPLICATION PROCESS

Findings

Although DEED's application process incorporates legislative priorities, the application process is unnecessarily cumbersome. The scoring of projects can be confusing and the program's priorities can be unclear, despite scoring

guidelines. As a result, DEED's capital project review and prioritization process is considered by some superintendents to be cumbersome, costly, and unfair.

As part of Public Works' assessment of DEED's capital projects system, the review team surveyed and interviewed school district superintendents and DEED staff. When asked in the survey if DEED's process for capital project review achieves its intended goals and fulfills its responsibilities, 66 percent of DEED staff and 46 percent of superintendents chose neither agree nor disagree. However, of those who selected an opinioned response, 36 percent of superintendents disagreed compared to 3 percent of DEED staff. Based on written feedback to the survey and personal interviews, the concerns superintendents raised were based on perceptions that the process is (1) cumbersome and expensive; and (2) unfair.

For example, it is perceived by some superintendents that, in order to submit a competitive application, districts must include professional drawings, plans, and other documents and information. Districts reported that hiring professionals to develop these documents is expensive: some districts reported that investing in the application paid off and they got funding, while others reported it as being a deterrent to applying at all. According to one survey taker, *The cost to prepare a project to get it to the top of the list is impossible for a small district*. Another described the process as *ridiculously cumbersome*.

Our review found that the need for such assistance and documentation depends on the scope of the project and the qualifications of district personnel developing it. DEED provides no-cost tools, manuals and guidelines, and assistance in the use of these resources, for all elements evaluated in the capital improvement project (CIP) process with some exceptions. Grant applications without drawings or plans produced by professionals do get evaluated, and eight applications without professional documentation did make it into the top 25 percent of the FY2017 Major Maintenance grant list.

The application itself is 12 pages long. It requires thorough documentation of need, cost, preventative maintenance plans, and other issues, plus various data and calculations. Depending on the project, over 25 attachments may also be required. For any district, compiling such a proposal would be a significant task; for a small district, it could be very challenging to impossible due to limited staff resources and training.

Assertions of unfairness by some superintendents were driven by two perceptions: first, that the resources required to submit a successful application effectively "price out" smaller districts; and second, that funding decisions are politicized. Multiple superintendents noted that larger districts seem to get more capital improvement funds (with the implication that larger districts have more resources to dedicate to a burdensome application process). Another stated that the process is too competitive and pits urban and rural districts against each other.

Potential politicization of the process was reflected in other comments: *Typically the decision defaults to less affluent districts,* and *large legislative delegations...bring home the bacon*. Frustration was also noted from one superintendent who complained that their district got funding, but not for what their application requested.

Recommendation 8.3.1

Initiate steps to make the capital funding application process less cumbersome and the scoring process more straightforward. (Tier 2)

Although DEED's application process incorporates legislative priorities, the application process is unnecessarily cumbersome. The scoring of projects can be confusing and the program's priorities can be unclear, despite scoring guidelines. Adjustments that could be adopted to simplify the application process and increase the clarity of scoring include the following recommendations:

- Simplify funding applications: Redundant or similar requirements should be eliminated or merged. Similar requirements (such as those addressing need, cost, or safety issues) should be clearly grouped.

- Clarify point allocations: On the application, clearly note both the number of points and the percentage of points available to be awarded for each group of requirements (such as need, cost, and safety issues), and for each element assessed within each group.

- Clarify how elements are scored: Currently on the application, an element might be noted as being worth "up to" a certain number of points. Applicants have to refer to scoring guidelines to learn what is required to get a full score. To clarify what is required for applicants, indicate on the

application how each element will be scored and what is required for full and partial scores.

- Simplify and clarify application scoring: The scoring sheets do not follow the same order as the application, which may cause confusion or inconsistent scoring. Reformat the scoring sheets so that they parallel the structure of the application.

- Consider revising the scoring process to better consider each district's priorities: Currently, districts are allowed to submit up to ten capital funding requests annually, each of which must be ranked by the district; however that ranking only comprises six percent of the total project score. As a result, some superintendents report frustration at receiving funding for their lower priority projects while their higher priority projects go unfunded.

- Clarify priorities: Of the total points possible in 2017, 35 percent are for awarded for need, 19 percent for safety, 17 percent each for planning and for cost, and six percent each for the consideration of alternatives and the district's ranking. Include a clear summary of this weighting on the application and scoring sheets so that funding priorities are clear to applicants, stakeholders, and decision makers.

This recommendation can be implemented utilizing existing resources.

8.4 PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE

Findings

As the state education agency, DEED monitors compliance of local school districts with state laws requiring adequate upkeep of school facilities through site visits conducted once every five years. Greater preventive maintenance efforts are needed to ensure the longevity and proper upkeep of state-financed buildings and equipment. As the state education agency, DEED is positioned to play a more supportive role than it currently does in ensuring that local school districts are aware of preventive maintenance standards and best practices.

It is the obligation of the State of Alaska to ensure that every Alaskan child has access to a quality education. In many states, the courts have determined that school facilities that provide suitable educational settings are a significant part of

this responsibility.[76] As such, DEED's role with respect to supporting preventive maintenance for school facilities should be considered both as a fiscal steward of limited state education resources, as well as integral to its core mandate of ensuring access to quality education.

Alaska Statutes 14.11.011(b)(4) and 14.11.100(j)(5) require that local school districts maintain adequate preventive maintenance plans and operations to be eligible for state school construction and major maintenance grant and debt reimbursement programs. Alaska Administrative Code title 8, § 31.013 specifically requires that districts have a facility management program that addresses five elements of facility and maintenance management to be eligible for state aid, including:

- **Maintenance Management Program** - a formal maintenance management program that records maintenance activities on a work order basis, and tracks the timing and cost, including labor and materials, of maintenance activities in sufficient detail to produce reports of planned and completed work.

- **Energy Management Plan** - an energy management plan that records energy consumption for all utilities on a monthly basis for each building (for facilities constructed before December 15, 2004, a district may record energy consumption for utilities on a monthly basis when multiple buildings are served by one utility plant).

- **Custodial Program** - a custodial program that includes a schedule of custodial activities for each building based on type of work and scope of effort.

- **Maintenance Training Program** - a maintenance training program that specifies training for custodial and maintenance staff and records the training received by each person.

- **Renewal and Replacement Schedule (R&R)** - a renewal and replacement schedule that identifies, for each school facility of permanent construction

[76] http://www.21csf.org/csf-home/publications/modelpolicies/planningsectionmay2005.pdf

> over 1,000 gross square feet, the construction cost of major building systems, including electrical, mechanical, structural and other components; evaluates and establishes the life-expectancy of those systems; compares life-expectancy to the age and condition of the systems; and uses the data to forecast a renewal and replacement year and cost for each system.[77]

According to DEED facilities staff, local school building preventive maintenance (PM) efforts are limited in many districts due to declining local budgets and challenges in attracting and retaining qualified maintenance personnel (particularly in areas of the state with high cost of living). Adequate training is not in place for maintenance and custodial staff in many local schools around the state. While DEED provides some training and technical assistance to districts to help mitigate these challenges, this is very limited due to staffing restrictions.

DEED staff members have identified a lack of training opportunities for local maintenance and facilities purchasing staff, particularly in districts with limited resources. In particular, more training is needed on the proper use of facilities technology used to operate automated programs such as heating systems.

Currently, DEED has one full-time facilities/building maintenance specialist who visits school districts once every five years to review facility maintenance practices and procedures in preparation of the annual Preventive Maintenance State-of-the-State Report. This report evaluates local district compliance with statutory and administrative requirements and determines eligibility for state CIP funding.

After DEED staff members conduct local site visits, they issue site reports outlining the deficiencies local districts must address to maintain CIP funding eligibility. The most recent (August 2015) Preventive Maintenance State-of-the-State Report[78] listed 50 of 53 districts as eligible for CIP funding.

---

[77] AAC 31.013
(a)(1-5).
[78] "PM State-of-the-State Report of DEED Maintenance Assessments and Related Data," August 15, 2015.

DEED provides limited resources to local districts to assist with preventive maintenance planning. While the department published the "Alaska School Facilities Preventive Maintenance Handbook" in 1999, the publication has not been updated in the last 17 years to reflect advances in technology and services. DEED does not currently provide local districts with PM best practices nor share "frequently-asked questions" or other information that could help districts with limited maintenance resources.

Recommendation 8.4.1

Enhance preventive maintenance training with local school districts. (Tier 2)

DEED should also update its "Alaska School Facilities Preventive Maintenance Handbook" to incorporate technology and service advancements since the most recent edition in 1999. This publication can help districts better understand rudimentary PM issues as other training opportunities are developed. The DEED facilities staff recognizes the need to update the handbook, particularly to address some maintenance reports that are now collected as part of the compliance process. The facilities team has tentatively scheduled an update to the Handbook for May 2017. In the interim, the department should direct districts to other readily available resources.

DEED can also be a great coordinator/conduit of information for districts that would like to share training costs with other organizations on a collaborative basis (e.g., training sponsored by several neighboring school districts or school districts in conjunction with other government/public works departments in the area). DEED should also encourage districts to pursue low- or no-cost training opportunities that can be provided by other staff with demonstrated expertise with equipment or processes, other local (non-school) facility staff, or even vocational education staff. DEED may also see opportunities to connect districts with other state agencies such as the Department of Administration that could offer examples of contract terms requiring vendors to provide training as a condition of the purchase of their products.

Recognizing current budget limitations, it is not feasible for DEED to provide additional resources for training. However, DEED can coordinate readily available training resources available (many online) from product vendors, equipment manufacturers, or school facility management organizations for little or no cost.

DEED can also develop limited mentoring or collaboration projects, such as the ones outlined here to augment PM training for local districts at little cost.

Recommendation 8.4.2

DEED should provide local school districts with preventive maintenance best practices and share "frequently-asked questions" and other information that could help districts with limited maintenance resources – especially within the context of compliance with DEED requirements. (Tier 2)

In addition to augmenting access to training resources, DEED should consider developing a FAQ or common problem database and connecting struggling districts with others who have addressed a problem. Given current budget limitations, this effort can start small by launching a simple online bulletin board for questions and answers about preventive maintenance, identifying and sharing best practices from local districts nationwide, and highlighting in particular those best practices that can be implemented with minimal resources, both human and capital. This can be augmented with more resources and functionality as funding allows.

Additionally, DEED staff should document and share best practices and "lessons learned" during regular site visits to keep a record of things that have worked for some districts and might benefit others.

To develop a more robust (i.e., more frequent) site visit schedule, DEED would need to augment both staff and travel budgets. Such increases are not likely given current budget limitations.

It should be noted that many studies have confirmed that allowing schools to deteriorate by deferring maintenance greatly increases total facilities costs because dilapidated schools are far more costly to repair than the cost of regular maintenance. An October 2014 report from the Council of the Great City Schools indicated that every $1 of preventive maintenance that is deferred results in $4 of expenditures to ultimately repair or replace building systems.[79] In other words, deferring maintenance reduces the value of the education dollar by a factor of 400 percent where school facilities are concerned.

[79] "Reversing the Cycle of Deterioration in the Nation's Public School Buildings," Council of the Great City Schools, October 2014, page 8.

8.5 POTENTIAL CHANGES TO THE CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Findings

In addition to evaluating the capital project review effectiveness, Objective 11 also called upon the review team to recommend any necessary changes to the capital development process, where appropriate, and specifically to examine potential changes such as the implementation of statewide sustainability standards or standardized design requirements. The review team examined those ideas for their applicability in Alaska.

A. Sustainability Standards

Sustainability standards refer to architectural and construction standards that make buildings more energy efficient and environmentally sound. The potential benefits of sustainable building include saving money on long-term energy and utility costs; increasing the comfort and health of building users; and causing less detriment to the environment. California adopted the first statewide green building standards code in the nation[80] and is considered a national leader on both school sustainability standards and standardization of school design requirements. California's standards address siting, indoor environment quality, energy, water, materials, community matters, and faculty and student performance.[81]

[80] *DSA-SS Green Code: CALGreen Code for Schools and Community Colleges.* California Division of the State Architect. Web. http://www.dgs.ca.gov/dsa/Programs/progSustainability/greencode.aspx Accessed February 22, 2016.
[81] *DSA: Project Submittal Guideline: CALGreen Code.* California Division of the State Architect. Web. http://www.documents.dgs.ca.gov/dsa/pubs/GL_4.pdf. Accessed February 22, 2016.

Recommendation 8.5.1

DEED should provide districts with information on sustainable building practices. (Tier 3)

Although school districts in Alaska have wide latitude in the design of their schools, they must ensure that the design is consistent with the Alaska Administrative Code. However, Alaska is one of just six states with no commercial building energy codes[82] and one of only three states with no energy efficiency requirements for public buildings.[83] The state also lags behind other states in the field of green building.[84] For example, Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) is one of the most popular green building certification programs used worldwide. Alaska has only one LEED certified building per 20,889 citizens, compared to leading states in the Pacific Northwest such as Washington (one LEED certified building per 14,779 citizens) and Oregon (one LEED certified building per 13,490 citizens).[85,86]

Adopting sustainability requirements for schools, while potentially beneficial for both districts and school users, would likely prove to be an arduous undertaking for DEED and result in increased building costs due to a lack of easily-available compliant resources and professionals knowledgeable in green building practices. Instead, DEED should make information and guidance available to interested districts. DEED may wish to refer to the California Division of the State Architect[87] as a model for providing such resources. This office provides design and construction oversight for K–12 schools, and as part of that function, has a

---

[82] *State Building Energy Codes.* National Council of State Legislatures, November 2013. Web. http://www.ncsl.org/research/energy/a-kilowatt-saved-is-a-kilowatt-earned-efficient-buildings-update-2013.aspx. Accessed February 22, 2016.

[83] *Energy Efficiency Requirements for Public Buildings.* National Council of State Legislatures, November 2013. Web. http://www.ncsl.org/research/energy/energy-efficiency-requirements-for-public-buildings.aspx. Accessed February 22, 2016.

[84] Dispenza, Kristin, *Green Building Efforts in Alaska.* Green Building Elements, February 2008. Web. http://greenbuildingelements.com/2008/02/05/green-building-efforts-in-alaska. Accessed February 22, 2016.

[85] LEED is a well-known certification developed by the non-profit U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) and offered worldwide. It rates structure sustainability based on design, construction, operation, and maintenance.

[86] LEED building statistics from: *LEED Projects.* Green Building. Web. http://greenbuildingwire.com/leed-projects. Accessed February 22, 2016. Population statistics from: *2010 Census Interactive Population Search.* U.S. Census Bureau. Web.

[87] http://www.dgs.ca.gov/dsa/home.aspx.

sustainability resources page that provides links and information about all aspects of sustainable school construction available at: http://www.sustainableschools.dgs.ca.gov/sustainableschools/

This recommendation can be implemented utilizing existing resources.

1.School Design Requirements

To evaluate the standardization of school design requirements beyond the scope of what exists in code, we reviewed the use of prototypical school design. Prototypical school design refers to the development of a single school design intended for use at several sites with minimal modifications. The rationale for using prototypical school design is to reduce design and construction costs for districts, particularly those that are quickly growing and need to build several schools over the course of a few years.

In 2015, the Alaska Legislature commissioned a report on the benefits and disadvantages (pros and cons) of prototypical school design in Alaska. Released in October 2015, *A Report on the Benefits and Disadvantages of Prototypical School Design and Construction in Alaska*¸ found that such a program is unlikely to be successful in Alaska due to the diverse needs and socioeconomic situations of its geographically disperse districts.[88]

Recommendation 8.5.2

DEED should not adopt prototypical designs for schools. (Tier 3)

The 2015 legislative report on the pros and cons of prototypical school design in Alaska clearly found that such a program is unlikely to be successful in Alaska.

[88] *A Report on the Benefits and Disadvantages of Prototypical School Design and Construction in Alaska.* Invision/Dejong-Richter, October 2015.

9 OBJECTIVES 12 AND 13: BUDGET REDUCTIONS PROPOSED BY DEED AND REPORTED PRIORITIES AND PROGRAMS

Objective 12: Evaluate the appropriateness of the budget reductions proposed by DEED in response to as 44.66.020(c)(2).

Objective 13: Evaluate whether DEED priorities and programs reported to the legislature are consistent with the results of the review.

Due to the interconnectedness of findings related to Objectives 12 and 13, for the purposes of this report, the review team has combined findings and recommendations for these two objectives.

For Objective 12, the review team was asked to determine whether:

- The agency prioritized in accordance with the AS 44.66.020(c)(2) when it developed the recommended cuts provided to the review team; and

- The department acted in good faith when recommending activities that can effectively be reduced without threatening the department's ability to meet its mission.

Alaska Statute 44.66.020(c)(2) states:

Sec. 44.66.020. Agency programs.

(c) In the year before the year designated as the year for review in (a) of this section, the agency shall provide to the review team, before November 1,

> *(2) a list of programs or elements of programs that compose at least 10 percent of the general funds in the agency's budget appropriated from the general fund that could be reduced or eliminated; the agency shall consider first those programs or elements of programs that*
>
> *(A) do not serve a current need;*
>
> *(B) are not authorized by the Constitution of the State of Alaska or the Alaska Statutes; or*

(C) are not essential to the agency mission or delivery of the agency's core services.

For Objective 13, the review team was asked to:

- Determine whether the findings of the review indicated that DEED focuses upon the mission statement, goals and results-based measures that are reported to the legislature and profiled in the state's Office of Management and Budget key performance indicators; and

- Offer a conclusion about whether the results of the review indicate that the budget reductions addressed under Objective 12 comport with DEED's mission statement, goals and results-based measures.

AS 37.07.050(a)(13) states:

Section 37.07.050. Agency Program and Financial Plans; Mission Statements.

(a) The agencies shall assure the development of a statewide system of results-based government designed to increase efficiency and effectiveness of state programs and services. Toward that end, each state agency shall, on a semi-annual basis, identify results-based measures that have been used to work toward achievement of the mission statement and desired results issued by the legislature and of other goals of the agency, and set out the results as measured. Each state agency shall also prepare information that shall be compiled and submitted on December 15 each year to the office, the legislature, and the legislative finance division; this information must ...

(13) prioritize the activities of the agency from the most important to the least important.

The review team evaluated how the proposed funding reductions would affect DEED's ability to meet its mandates and its stated priorities, and whether alternative funding reductions might be more aligned with the department's strategic priorities. The review team's assessment of DEED's proposed funding reductions complements this analysis and is included below.

Overview and Summary of the Conclusion for Objectives 12 and 13

DEED appears to have acted in good faith when recommending funding reductions that totaled ten percent of its available General Fund. The majority of activities it selected can effectively be reduced without significantly threatening the department's ability to fulfill its mission, although that does not mean the cuts will not have an impact. Four proposed reductions, however, address a current need, one of which may be considered critical for the department to fulfill its mission.

DEED appears to organize its work largely in a manner consistent with the mission, goals, and performance-based measures that are reported to the legislature and profiled in the state's Office of Management and Budget key performance indicators. Such goals and measures constitute an important dimension of public accountability.

The team reviewed survey information, interview summaries, student achievement data, and fiscal performance information. The team also revisited its findings, commendations and recommendations for improvement across all the performance objectives. All of this was part of the effort to discern whether there is alignment between DEED's strategic aims and its priorities as implemented and in practice. The results of this analysis are provided in the findings below. Overall, DEED's activities are focused on its mission, goals and results-based measures that are reported to the legislature and profiled in the state's Office of Management and Budget key performance indicators. Examples of such alignment are provided in the findings.

While DEED, for the most part, aligns its activities to its strategic aims, there are a number of exceptions. Some of these exceptions are noteworthy and constitute a significant departure from DEED's mission statement, goals and results-based measures. Examples of these instances are also cited in the findings.

9.1 PROPOSED BUDGET REDUCTIONS

Findings

The budget reductions proposed by DEED are presented below in **Exhibit 9-1.** Rows highlighted in orange highlight reductions inconsistent with the findings of the performance review and/or deemed to put at risk the success of the department in fulfilling its mission. The review team recommends that these not be included among proposed budget reductions. Rows highlighted in red are reductions that may be expected to negatively affect mission critical services over the long-term and/or negatively impact sound educational investments based on trends in educational attainment. For these recommendations, the review team provides alternative approaches to cost-savings.

EXHIBIT 9-1
PROPOSED BUDGET REDUCTIONS SUBMITTED BY DEED to DLA November 16, 2015

	Program	Description	General Fund Reduction (in 000s)	Personnel Reduction
1	School Finance & Facilities	Eliminate remaining funding and position for the completed HB278 legislative report on prototypical designs for school construction	$66.0 UGF	-1 NP[a]
2	**Student & School Achievement**	**Remove college and career readiness assessment funding**	**$525.0 DGF**	**0**
3	Student & School Achievement	Eliminate state funding for AK Resource Education pass-through grant funds for districts.	$25.0 UGF	0
4	Student & School Achievement	Delete vacant positions (funding for positions removed in FY16)	$0	-3 FT
5	Alaska Native Science & Engineering Program	Reduce grant funding for ANSEP	$385.2 UGF	0
6	**Early Learning Coordination**	**Eliminate Parents as Teachers and Best Beginnings grants**	**$820.0 UGF**	**0**
7	**Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) Grants**	**Eliminate Pre-K funding**	**$2,000.0 UGF**	**0**
8	State Facilities Rent	Remove one-time funding for additional facilities costs required during LAM's transition	$200.0 UGF	0

		to its new building		
9	Library Operations	Reduce broadband funding for school districts	$672.7 UGF	0
		UGF total	**$4,168.9**	
		DGF total	**$525.0**	
		Total Reductions	**$4,693.9**	**-3 FT -1 NP***

*NP = Non-permanent position
Source: DEED 2016

The review team evaluated whether the reductions proposed by the department: (1) comply with AS 44.66.020(c)(2); and (2) represent a good faith effort by the department to identify areas that can be reduced without compromising the ability of the department to meet its mission. To evaluate the proposed cuts, selected staff in each affected division and program were interviewed. Where applicable, we also reviewed program documents and conducted cost-benefit analyses and best practices research. The review team found the following.

- The department submitted its proposed budget to the Governor's Office by the November 1 deadline. However, the proposed budget reductions were not submitted to the performance review team prior to November 1 as required in statute; they were submitted to the team by the department on November 16.

- The proposed reductions submitted equal ten percent of the general fund dollars in the department that could be reduced or eliminated. The unrestricted general fund (UGF) appropriation in the FY2016 Management Plan for DEED totals $1,301 million. Of that amount, $1,259 million is K-12 Aid to School Districts and K-12 Support, also referred to as DEED's formula programs. If K-12 Aid to School Districts and K-12 Support is deducted from the total UGF, $41.7 million remains in various non-formula general fund appropriations. The reductions submitted total $4.168 million, or 10 percent of the adjusted UGF total (total UGF less K-12 Aid to School Districts and K-12 Support).

- All of the funding for proposed reductions was authorized, but not required in statute, although authorization for college and career readiness assessments is scheduled to be repealed June 30, 2016.

- DEED appears to have acted in good faith when recommending activities that can effectively be reduced without significantly threatening the department's ability to meet its mission. However, of the nine proposed reductions, four address a current need, and one may be considered critical for the department to meet its mission (the $2.0 reduction in Pre-K funding). These five reductions are discussed below. For reference, the department's mission, per the Alaska Constitution Article 7, Sec. 1; AS 14.17 is: *To ensure quality standards-based instruction to improve academic achievement for all students.*

#2: Removal of $525,000 in College and Career Readiness funding.

House Bill 278, Alaska's Education Opportunity Act, was signed into law and became effective on July 1, 2014. The law requires all grade 11 students, and all grade 12 students who have not previously done so, to take a college or career readiness assessment (CCRA) to earn a high school diploma in Alaska. The CCRA assessments are defined in statute and regulation as WorkKeys, ACT, and SAT.

By statute, DEED is obligated to pay the fee for each student to take one of the CCRAs. However, portions of HB 278 (specifically AS 14.03.075(a),(b),(c), and (e)(1)) are scheduled to be repealed on June 30, 2016. As a result, this funding will no longer be required by statute and thus was included as a proposed reduction. Nonetheless, although the statutory requirement is being eliminated, the funding does meet a current need.

Nationally, one in four of the 1.9 million high school students who graduated in 2015 and took the ACT are from low-income backgrounds.[89] According to the latest version of an annual report from the ACT testing organization and the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships, this group continues to lag in college readiness. Removing funding for CCRAs may make it increasingly difficult for low-income students to afford one, and for rural students without the resources to travel to a test site to take a CCRA As a result, the number of students qualifying for the Alaska Performance Scholarships (for which

[89] Fain, Paul. *College Readiness of Low-Income Students Stagnates.* Inside Higher Ed, February 5, 2016. www.insidehigheredcom

CCRA test scores are a required to qualify) will decline. The Office of Management and Budget's website shows that one of DEED's targets is: *Increase the numbers and percent of high school graduates qualifying for the Alaska Performance Scholarships (APS).*

Although this funding serves a compelling need – helping low income students qualify for APS – eliminating it would not hinder the department's ability to meet its mission of ensuring quality standards-based instruction. However, in the interest of promoting greater educational attainment for low-income students, DEED should maintain sufficient funding to provide CCRAs to those students who are interested in taking the assessment and who demonstrate financial need.

#6: Elimination of $820,000 for Parents as Teachers and Best Beginnings grants.

DEED is charged with the supervision of pre-elementary programs. Parents as Teachers (PAT) is an international home visitation program dedicated to providing parent education services to families expecting children and with children up to five years of age through personal visits and group meetings. Families enrolled in PAT receive personal visits, parent group meetings, and screenings resource referrals. The program reports home visit and screening services to 800 families and1000 children.

Best Beginnings is a public-private partnership that mobilizes people and resources to ensure all Alaska children begin school ready to succeed. Programs include books and other resources for pre-K children, advocacy services, and development of a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) for early childhood programs. The program reports recently giving away its 500,000th book to a child in Alaska.

There are consistent assertions across governmental, judicial, and program documents of the state's interest in and intent to support the readiness of children for kindergarten.

- The Office of Management and Budget's website shows that one of DEED's targets is: *Provide support to school districts for Early Learning programs to assist communities, parents and caregivers in preparing children for school.*

- Provisions of the Moore v. Alaska lawsuit settlement make clear the state's intent and awareness of its obligation to serve pre-Kindergarten children.

- The state charges DEED with holding Pre-K programs accountable via the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R). The state further charges DEED to manage health and safety inspections in programs.

Additionally, investment in Pre-K educational services is vital to sound education policy because research consistently points to the benefits and long-term return on investment in Pre-K programs. Illustrative studies and the related returns are outlined below in **Exhibit 9-2.**

EXHIBIT 9-2
SAMPLE OF STUDIES ADDRESSING PRE-K RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI) OF $1

Study	ROI for $1 Spent	Source Document
MIT, 2005	$8 - $13	*Early Childhood Education for All: A Wise Investment*
Perry Preschool, 2006, 2010	$7, $16	*The High/Scope Perry Preschool Program: Cost-Benefit Analysis Using Data from the Age 40*
Chicago, 2011	$11	*Age 26 Cost-Benefit Analysis of the Child-Parent Center Early Education Program.*

Therefore, while this reduction would not hinder the department's ability to meet its mission of ensuring quality standards-based instruction, the review team does not recommend implementing it because it is in direct conflict with peer-reviewed and evidence-based state education policy and best practices research.

#7: Elimination of $2.0 million in pre-K funding.

This proposal would reduce funding for an early learning coordination pilot project. These funds support grants that allow Pre-K programs to serve 250 - 300 pre-elementary low-income, high-needs children. DEED proposes to defund the Pre-K program because it is not a statewide program and is not serving all of

Alaska, and no additional funding is forthcoming that would make it a fair and equitable program for the entire state.

However, as discussed above under Issue #6, the state has made explicit its commitment to pre-K education, which is known to yield significant returns on investment, and is supported by education research. Additionally, this reduction would hinder the department's ability to meet its mission of ensuring quality standards-based instruction to preschoolers; therefore, the review team recommends that this reduction not be implemented.

#9: Reducing broadband funding for school districts by $672,700.

This reduction would reduce state support for broadband funding for school districts. Districts report that although they currently may be at the 10MB level for broadband services, this level is not always sufficient to meet the instructional and online assessment demands. This gap in capacity and demand will continue to grow as instructional delivery continues to rely more and more on digital content.

Therefore, while this reduction may not impact the department meeting its mission in the immediate budget year, the budget impact and service level deficiencies will be felt by some of the districts in the short-term, and in the long-run, reducing support for broadband coverage may reduce DEED's ability to use technology, digital content, and online assessment in the state's schools. As discussed in more detail under technology recommendations, we recommend the state *increase* the wireless, wide area network, and broadband internet connectivity services to school districts. At a minimum, the state should offer training on broadband options, how to plan for and acquire wireless and broadband networks, contract terms/negotiations, service level agreements, and network monitoring/management, and it should continue to offer E-Rate assistance.

Recommendation 9.1.1

Eliminate or modify proposed budget reductions. (Tier 1)

Although most of the proposed budget reductions submitted by DEED do not threaten the department's ability to meet its mission, one does, and three others

address important current needs. As a result, the review team recommends eliminating or modifying some of the proposed reductions.

Given the timing of this report's release, DEED and the legislature have already made the proposed cuts that the review team was asked to evaluate; however, the review team recommends that DEED quickly evaluate the need for establishing funding streams for Parents as Teachers, Best Beginnings, and Pre-K services that were eliminated in the 2016 legislative session.

During the course of this performance review, a number of areas of potential short- and long-term cost savings have been identified. These are summarized below in **Exhibit 9-3**, along with the associated review team recommendation and page number of this report where further discussion of each opportunity can be found. Some of recommendations will require an upfront investment with long-term savings to accrue post-implementation.

EXHIBIT 9-3
AREAS FOR ALTERNATIVE FUTURE SAVINGS
IDENTIFIED DURING REVIEW, BY RECOMMENDATION

OBJ #	RECOMMENDATION	SAVINGS OPPORTUNITY	PAGE
1	**Recommendation 1.2.3**: Consider becoming a member of the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE).	Return on investment accrues from developing the effectiveness, expertise, and knowledge of best practices of the State Board and the resulting increase in quality of governance. Indirect cost savings through more efficient and effective governance cannot be estimated, but are potentially substantial.	38
3, 4, & 10	**Recommendation 3.1.1:** Elevate recruitment as a mission critical activity for DEED leadership and involve the entire department in recruitment planning and implementation.	Savings accrue from increased effectiveness and efficiency through filling priority vacancies. Indirect savings in reduction of staff turnover cannot be estimated but are likely to be substantial.	79
3,4, & 10	**Recommendation 3.5.1:** Revamp the coaching model for struggling schools to provide a team-based, integrated program of support and educator development to struggling schools and add emerging technologies for delivery of these services.	Implementation of this recommendation will incur modest initial and ongoing costs while greatly expanding DEED's impact. Minimal implementation costs are likely to be offset by significant direct and indirect savings to the districts and to the state.	97

3,4 & 10	**Recommendation 3.5.2:** DEED should coordinate the development of, and provide support for, a base curriculum and aligned instructional resources across a select set of academic contents.	The implementation of such a curriculum is expected to yield overall savings by reducing the overhead cost of local school districts.	102
3,4, & 10	**Recommendation 3.6.1:** Repeal Alaska Statute 14.17.520 requiring school districts to spend at least 70 percent of their operating funds on instruction.	Significant cost savings in terms of staff time are likely to be achieved for local districts, DEED staff and State Board members if time-consuming waiver requests are eliminated or substantially reduced.	108
5 & 6	**Recommendation 4.7.1**: DEED should work with the Department of Administration to educate local school districts about pooled purchasing opportunities, including purchases from state contracts	Indirect cost savings accrue to DEED and to the State of Alaska from reducing direct overhead costs of education to local school districts.	136
8	**Recommendation 6.1.1**: Adopt a model similar to the Arizona opt-in system for providing SIS and IEP systems to local school districts.	State savings are achieved by reducing the costs to districts for license fees and hosting/hardware costs. Implementation costs will be minimal and offset by new revenue streams from the local school districts.	160
8	**Recommendation 6.2.2:** Consider model applications in use by other states for use in Alaska as the need for replacing or significantly enhancing existing applications arise	Direct cost savings over alternative approaches of purchase or in-house development; many states offer sharing tools at no cost; licensing and ongoing maintenance fees may also be avoided.	163
8	**Recommendation 6.5.1:** Solicit expertise (particularly from within the state, as well as nationally) to set a clear and comprehensive path forward for technology in Alaska's education system, clarifying the role that DEED and other state departments play, and align the state budget with organizational responsibilities to ensure the strategic plan is implemented.	Implementation costs are offset by cost savings over poor or failed implementations in the absence of a strategic plan; further costs savings to be achieved from volume contract agreements and pursuing IT projects jointly/statewide rather than by individual district.	171
	Recommendation 6.10.1: Continue to consolidate servers in DEED and work to organize the wiring and data.	DEED should carefully consider the return on investment of continued maintenance of a private data center vs. leasing cage/Rackspace at a qualified data center, or moving applications to a cloud-based environment.	177
8	**Recommendation 6.11.1**: Adopt a project management methodology such as Pull Planning, Project Management Office, or Deliverology, to be used consistently across DEED for future	Cost savings through avoidance of risk and costs associated with poor or unsuccessful implementation of technology projects.	179

	major initiatives.		
9	**Recommendation 7.1.1**: Eliminate duplication of work processes by DEED, the Professional Teaching Practices Commission (PTPC), and university teacher preparation programs	Combined cost savings of **Recommendation 7.1.1** and **7.1.2** estimated at a minimum of $100,000 to the state's general fund. The current position cost for the PTPC secretary is $74,918 and the director's total position cost is $145,403. Even a smaller-than-recommended reduction to ¾ FTE director status would result in approximately $30,000 savings. Additional savings to be achieved through additional components of the recommendations (e.g., elimination of a separate facility for the PTPC and reduced travel costs for the director).	183
9	**Recommendation 7.1.2**: Amend AS 14.20.370-510 Professional Teaching Practices Act to consolidate the work of the Professional Teaching Practices Commission into the Teacher Certification Office's work.		184
11	**Recommendation 8.4.2**: DEED should provide local school districts with preventive maintenance best practices and share "frequently-asked questions" and other information that could help districts with limited maintenance resources – especially within the context of compliance with DEED requirements.	Every $1 of preventive maintenance that is deferred results in $4 of expenditures to ultimately repair or replace building systems. In other words, deferring maintenance reduces the value of the education dollar by a factor of 400 percent where school facilities are concerned; facilitating improved preventive maintenance practices at low-to-no cost to DEED will yield long-term savings.	199
14	**Recommendation 10.4.1:** Ensure that all DEED staff working with school district transportation services develop a plan to implement recommendations to reduce school district transportation costs.	Alaska pays over $80 million annually to transport its students; there are significant potential savings to be realized through implementation of the study's recommendations.	226
14	**Recommendation 10.10.1:** Work with the legislature and State Board to enable facility rentals at the new LAM building.	This state of the art building has the potential to provide a new source of revenue and cost recovery as a rental facility for special events.	240
14	**Recommendation 10.18.1:** Establish a process for developing and adopting, a specific plan for shared services between Mt. Edgecumbe High School and Sitka School District.	Cost savings to be achieved through mutually beneficial efforts to share educational assets, including staff, course materials, facilities, and professional development resources.	262
14	**Recommendation 10.19.1**: Cease expenditures on the planned MEHS aquatics center.	The state could save funds by halting the construction of the pool and saving any future aquatic center operational funds.	263
14	**Recommendation 10.20.1:** Consider changing the governance structure of MEHS to a quasi-corporation structure in order to enhance its efficiency and effectiveness.	While cost savings cannot be estimated until the preferred model is selected, efficiency savings are projected.	267

9.2 DEED PRIORITIES AND PROGRAMS

Findings

Through its actions, policy priorities, and deployment of resources, DEED and the State Board of Education, focus upon the mission statement, goals and results-based measures that are reported to the legislature and profiled in the state's Office of Management and Budget key performance indicators. The review team's findings under Objective 13 are organized according to DEED's mission statement, goals and results-based measures, as profiled in the state's Office of Management and Budget key performance indicators.

Mission: To ensure quality standards-based instruction to improve academic achievement for all students. (Alaska Constitution Article 7, Sec. 1; AS 14.17.)

Key Performance Indicator: Distribute Public School Funding

1. *Distribute Public School Funding to school districts and other educational institutions. Ensure funding is appropriately distributed to recipients based on legislative appropriation and by statute and in accordance with the foundation formula, other formula programs, or legislative intent for funding outside the primary funding formulas.*

    a) *Target: Calculate and distribute state entitlement funding based on the Base Student Allocation and formula calculations per AS 14.17.*
    b) *Target: Distribute Public School Funding according to legislative appropriations based on formula calculations*

Alignment of DEED actions to this goal and these measures:

Survey and interview responses, along with analyses of DEED's budget documents indicated that DEED focuses appropriately upon deployment of public education funds in a manner that is consistent with statute and with generally accepted principles of sound budgeting.

Key Performance Indicator: Provide Fiscal Accountability

2. *Provide Fiscal Accountability, Compliance and Oversight. Ensure the department effectively and efficiently manages state, federal and other funding by providing comprehensive fiscal and administrative services*

a) *Target: Provide efficient fiscal accountability, compliance and oversight for the Department of Education and Early Development's operating and capital budgets and programs*
b) *Target: Limit the number of state and federal audit findings*

Alignment of DEED actions to this goal and these measures:

Survey and interview responses, along with analyses of budget documents provided by DEED indicate that the department holds agency staff and local school districts accountable for the expenditure of public education funds in a manner that is consistent with statute and with generally accepted principles of accounting.

DEED gives further indication of its focus on this goal and these measures by providing consistent support to staff and districts. In interviews, both DEED and district leaders underscored the department's "open door policy" and availability to quickly address questions related to funding and compliance.

Some minor exceptions were noted when DEED faced turnover in key positions and lost institutional knowledge during the personnel transitions.

Key Performance Indicator: School Effectiveness Programs

3. *Develop, implement and maintain School Effectiveness Programs. Assist school districts by providing programs, technical on-site and distance-delivery support, and early intervention services in efforts to increase the statewide graduation rate.*

    a. *Target: Assist school districts to improve the statewide graduation rate*
    b. *Target: Increase the teacher retention rate through the Alaska Statewide Mentoring Program*
    c. *Target: Provide a Statewide System of Support to facilitate school effectiveness measures*
    d. *Target: Provide support to school districts for Early Learning programs to assist communities, parents and caregivers in preparing children for school*
    e. *Target: Facilitate the College and Career Ready curriculum and assessment program*
    f. *Target: Increase the numbers and percent of high school graduates qualifying for the Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS).*

Alignment of DEED actions to this goal and these measures:

Survey and interview responses, along with analyses of academic and other performance data, indicate that DEED focuses upon this goal and related measures. DEED's work on the development of more rigorous and relevant academic content standards has been positive. A great deal of time and attention are provided by DEED staff to the implementation of the standards and to the alignment of these standards to the state's assessment and accountability program. Graduation rates, while below the national average, are improving steadily over time.

Some exceptions to the state's focus on this goal and these measures were noted. The legislature is poised to cut funds for the teacher mentoring program, an important piece of the effort to retain new teachers. DEED recommended a reduction of funding that will eliminate approximately 300 Pre-K slots for disadvantaged children. The agency also recommended cutting funds to increase internet broadband access in rural schools. Concerns about these reductions were previously discussed in the preceding section, **9.1 Proposed Budget Reductions.**

Feedback from interviews and surveys indicate that DEED's general support for implementation of academic content standards is limited. In addition, the state system of support for struggling schools needs to be revamped (see **Recommendation 3.5.1).**

Gaps in student achievement, as evidenced by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and other student performance data, persist by race and income.

Key Performance Indicator: Maintain Active Partnerships

4) *Maintain Active Partnerships for Pre-K through 20 and Lifelong Learning. Provide opportunities for, and collaborate with government entities, and other public and private organizations to engage in Active Partnerships in pursuit of state educational goals*

   a. *Target: Continue to support the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program with the University of Alaska*

b. *Target: By 2020, growth to equal the national average of Alaska high school graduates continuing on to postsecondary education within a year of graduation.*
c. *Target: Collaborate and coordinate with public and private entities for educational purposes*

Alignment of DEED actions to this goal and these measures:

Survey and interview responses, indicate that DEED focuses upon this goal and the related measures. The Alaska Staff Development Network is a primary collaborator, and DEED works with Alaska Teacher Placement, ATP. Frequent mention was made of collaboration with the universities, particularly the educator preparation programs. Also noteworthy is **Commendation 4.A**, recognizing DEED for developing a strong partnership (regarding professional development opportunities) with the Alaska Superintendents' Association (ASA) and the Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA). **Commendation 4.B** of this report addresses DEED's strong partnership with other state entities to improve its Career and Technical Education initiatives offered to students and its use of a scorecard to measure progress on the plan. There is significant coordination among DEED and other entities that deliver early childhood services as documented in **Commendation 4.C**.

Some exceptions to the state's focus on this goal and these measures were noted. While there are efforts at collaboration among DEED and other organizations, there were frequent indications in interview responses that the quality of collaboration needs to be improved. Survey results reflected that the impact of such collaboration is not perceived as great; only about one third of superintendents agreed that DEED's collaboration with other organizations ensures quality instruction and improves academic achievement. A number of recommendations under Objectives 5 and 6 of this report advise strengthening collaborative efforts.

Finally, while Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program is cited as a priority in this goal and its related targets, DEED recommended a reduction of $385,000 in grant funding for ANSEP.

10 OBJECTIVE 14: OTHER ELEMENTS

Objective 14: Identify any other elements appropriate to a performance review.

For Objective 14, Public Works identified other elements appropriate to the performance review that were not specifically related to Objectives 1 through 13; however, the review team's findings demonstrate that the following topics are important for DEED to consider and/or address to further enhance its efficiency and effectiveness.

10.1 FOOD SERVICES: FUNDING

Findings

DEED is actively pursuing food and nutrition grants to assist in supplementing the funds received through the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).

The NSLP is a federal program signed into law by U.S. President Harry Truman. The purpose of the program is to improve the health of children who are food insecure or at risk of malnutrition. Recently, nutritional guidelines have been developed to address issues of obesity.

Studies have shown a positive correlation between the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the impact on children's education. These studies suggest that subsidized lunches induce children to attend school, and also free up food at home for other family members to consume. Researchers from the Georgetown University Public Policy Institute have found that "increasing NSLP exposure by ten percentage points results in an average increase in education of .365 years" for women, and for men this same increase in exposure "increases average education by nearly a year".[90] Today, the NSLP reaches a broad base of children from different socioeconomic backgrounds. To an extent, it is targeted towards children from lower socio-economics backgrounds, and it has a positive effect on their educational outcomes.

Exhibit 10-1 illustrates the food and nutrition grants that DEED has applied for and been awarded since 2013, totaling $2,309,649.

---

[90] Dunifon, Rachel and Lori Kowaleski-Jones. 2003. "The Influences of Participation in the National School Lunch Program and Food Insecurity on Child Well- Being." Social Service Review 77(1):72-92.

EXHIBIT 10-1

DEED FOOD AND NUTRITION GRANTS APPLIED FOR AND AWARDED 2013-17

FY	Grant Name	Awarding Agency	Amount Requested	Amount Received	Description
FY13	Breakfast Expansion	USDA	211,632	not awarded	Expand school breakfast programs
FY13	Team Nutrition	USDA	152,728	not awarded	Smarter Lunchroom Techniques
FY13-15	Team Nutrition	USDA	327,102	327,102	provide chef training, develop materials for districts to cook from scratch, HUSSC outreach
FY13-FY15	ART Method II	USDA	1,102,394	1,058,915	software project for district oversight, tools, etc.
FY14	Team Nutrition	USDA	294,804	not awarded	Farm to Child Care
FY14	Demonstration Project to End Childhood Hunger	USDA	897,550	not awarded	create AK Native training program with focus on local champions
FY14-FY15	Equipment Grants, noncompetitive	USDA	-	99,095	provide subgrants to districts for kitchen equipment
FY15-FY16	Equipment Grants, noncompetitive	USDA	-	68,326	provide subgrants to districts for kitchen equipment
FY15-FY16	CACFP Reallocation	USDA	118,750	118,750	develop e-learning modules
FY15-FY16	SAE Reallocation	USDA	91,000	91,000	develop e-learning modules & RSA to DNR for Farm-to-School staffing
FY16	Direct Certification Improvement	USDA	128,802	128,802	streamline direct certification methods
FY16-FY17	Professional Standards	USDA	122,053	122,053	provide training and technical assistance to school districts
FY16-FY17	Team Nutrition	USDA	309,252	295,606	provide Smarter Lunchrooms training, provide Farm to School/Day Care/Summer subgrants (partial RSA to DNR for F2S)
	Total		**$3,756,067**	**$2,309,649**	

Source: DEED Food and Nutrition Division, 2016.

Commendation 10.A

DEED's Food and Nutrition Division is commended for actively pursuing and securing grants to augment its funding sources.

10.2 FOOD SERVICES: PARTICIPATION

Findings

While DEED has a substantially lower than expected percentage of student participation in NSLP, DEED is actively implementing actions to address this issue. According to interviews and documents, the rationale for such low participation is multi-faceted. For example, there are two participation levels; one is the district level and the other is the student level.

District participation in NSLP is a district-by-district decision. The federal reimbursement rate for schools is enhanced for Alaska, although for rural districts not all of the costs are covered. Thus, districts must determine if they can subsidize the school nutrition account. Almost all districts in Alaska do.

According to data and interviews, in School Year 15-16, DEED faced a budget reduction to district operating funds. As a result, the state had three small districts terminate their NSLP participation because they no longer felt financially able to subsidize the program. Other factors impacting NSLP are the high cost of transportation into rural Alaska, the high cost of foods (particularly since the implementation of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHFKA) requirements for more fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain products), professional standards for hiring, and continuing education for school nutrition staff.

At the student level, factors impacting participation include the decline of participation with the implementation of the nutritional requirements of the HHFKA of 2010.

Alaska followed national trends in experiencing a decline in NSLP participation, with slight increases in breakfast program participation. Alaska experienced a 6.1 percent growth in NSLP, which was actually the highest in the nation, and a 21.4 percent increase in breakfast, which was the second highest in the nation.

The new Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), which allows for universal (free) meal programs at schools with a high number of low-income children, also

affects participation. Alaska ranks third nationally for CEP participation. CEP removes barriers to participation for children, particularly by removing the social stigma of participation as being indicative of low-income status.

Despite the three districts that left the NSLP, DEED was able to secure a waiver from USDA to allow the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe to administer the NSLP in that community. Additionally, DEED staff were interviewed for the annual report to Congress on their process to remove barriers to participation for low-income children.

Other recent accomplishments of the division include:

- The student level participation in the Summer Food Service Program has grown by 54.2 percent;

- Being one of the first states to add the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations and migrant eligibility on DEED's monthly direct certification process to districts; and

- DEED received a USDA award for outstanding performance in Direct Certification.

Commendation 10.B

DEED is commended for its focused efforts to improve food and nutrition services to districts.

10.3 TRANSPORTATION: DRIVER TRAINING

Findings

The state's bus driver training manual is out-of-date, is not user-friendly, and does not contain adequate best practices information.

The State of Alaska's school bus driver training instructor's manual was last updated in June of 2000. Interviews and data provided by DEED indicate that some efforts have been made to update the manual, but DEED leadership does take full responsibility for the incomplete work on the manual. The current document has a large number of out-of-date sections. These include but are not limited to the following items.

- Alaska Statutes section is out of date;
- Public Safety Requirements section is out of date;
- First aid information is out of date;
- Pre-Trip Inspections section does not address Electronic Vehicle Inspection Reporting, which is used in most large districts;
- Turning and backing sections do not address Type D (flat front) buses, which are very common in Alaska;
- Loading and unloading section does not include the requirement to set the parking brake;
- Railroad crossing section needs to be updated to reflect current practices;
- All of the films used in the training program are from the 1970's; newer material is available; and
- The Student Management section does not address bullying.

The manual also has an entire lesson on "Smooth Starts and Stops," focusing on the use of standard transmissions no longer used in school buses. According to DEED, the State School Bus Inspector confirms that there are still manual transmission buses in use in the state. If this is accurate, the buses are well over 20 years old and districts should be encouraged to phase these buses out as soon as possible.

Exhibit 10-2 below presents a summary of accidents as reported by the school districts for the years 2014 through 2016. As shown, 246 of the accidents in the past three years were the fault of the bus driver.

EXHIBIT 10-2
SCHOOL DISTRICT BUS ACCIDENT REPORT SUMMARY 2014-16

Fiscal Year	Fatalities	Passengers w/Serious Injuries	Passengers w/Minor Injuries	Damage over $500.00	Total Number of Accidents
FY14	0	0	11	43	143
FY15	0	0	11	43	137
FY16	0	0	4	36	119

Source: DEED Transportation Division, 2016.

The review team was also provided with data that showed the number of accidents with no injuries and the number of accidents where the bus driver was at fault for the years 2014-16. Subsequent to the review team's onsite visit, the team was informed that DEED did not sanction the collection of the data. However, state departments should be collecting these data points and actively analyzing the results to ensure that necessary adjustments for training and

technical assistance to the districts, and to reduce or eliminate preventable accidents or injuries.

Districts should not be tasked with updating their own district transportation manuals. DEED should be responsible for this task in order to ensure that all districts demonstrate a clear understanding of state requirements and the tenets of safe transportation of students in a school bus. The safety of transporting students should be a high priority for DEED, and drivers must be trained using updated materials to ensure the safest possible transport of students.

Recommendation 10.3.1

Update the Alaska's school bus driver training instructor's manual, post the updated manual on DEED's website, and ensure the additional collection of data involving accidents with no injuries and accidents where the bus driver is at fault. (Tier 1)

Several of the larger school districts contract for bus driving services. One option is to approach the contractors to request copies of their manuals for review and to negotiate to allow the state to use their manuals as a basis for updating the state manual. If this is done internally, there should not be any fiscal impact to implement this recommendation. Should the state not have the internal capacity to implement this recommendation, they should immediately contract this job to ensure bus drivers are properly trained. It is estimated that if the task were contracted to update the manual, it would cost approximately $8,000.

DEED should collect data on whether the bus driver was or was not cited for the accident (i.e. "at fault") in order to identify potential deficiencies in bus driver training and to improve transportation safety for students – as well as to participate in national database data collections and thus measure the state's safety performance against national benchmarks. Some states refer to this data point as "preventable vs. non-preventable accidents. "The Colorado Department of Education posts its manual on its website. It was last updated in 2013 and can be found at: http://www.cde.state.co.us/transportation/drivertrainermanual.

The Georgia Department of Education school bus driver manual is available at: http://www.gadoe.org/Finance-and-Business-Operations/Pupil-Transportation/Pages/Training-Manual.aspx.

10.4 TRANSPORTATION: COST-EFFICIENCY

Findings

The Alaska Legislature enacted CSSB 182 in 2012, which brought about changes to the pupil transportation statute requiring DEED to adopt regulations that provide for oversight and support to school districts in achieving a safe and cost-effective student transportation system.

To fulfill this new requirement, in September 2013 DEED hired JSK Transportation Consulting, LLC, to evaluate pupil transportation in Alaska. To date, several of the study's recommendations have still not been implemented. When interviewed, key DEED transportation services staff were not familiar with the study or its results. Although DEED leadership indicated they were familiar with the report subsequently to the review team's onsite visit, those staff directly related to carrying out the various recommendations had not been appropriately informed about the JSK study.

The JSK study's executive summary states, *DEED should provide more guidance and oversight over local transportation programs in order to promote efficiency.* For example, the report states that DEED should:

- Reimburse districts for the cost of adult crossing guards if they can be provided more economically than school bus service. DEED does not do this;

- Develop age and mileage standards for bus replacement. DEED has not done this;

- Require districts to track the cost of field trips and activity buses. DEED has only started tracking these activities this year; thus, there is no comparative data to date;

- Monitor whether districts enforce the 1.5-mile walk zones for schools. DEED does not do this; and

- Require school districts to purchase fuel from the contractor or include a fuel cap clause in all future contracts. Interviews indicate this is not required.

Recommendation 10.4.1

Ensure that all DEED staff working with school district transportation services develop a plan to implement recommendations to reduce school district transportation costs. (Tier 1)

According to interviews, Alaska pays over $80 million to transport students. Leaders in DEED need to closely analyze the transportation study and act upon several of its recommendations to reduce the state's transportation costs.

The review team in no way suggests that department staff ignored the regulatory process that was undertaken in response to SB 182. The review team recommends, however, that the department do more to monitor and investigate the districts' pupil transportation programs for cost efficiencies. While the review team acknowledges that DEED has made some effort to help reduce transportation costs, more can be done in light of the state's financial challenges. Many states nationwide are reducing K-12 transportation costs while continuing to provide quality transportation services for students.

There is no cost to implement this recommendation; however, there are significant potential savings to be realized through the implementation of some of the study's recommendations, as described in the above findings.

10.5 PROGRAM EVALUATION

Findings

DEED lacks a strong program evaluation component that assists the state and the districts in making program and operational decisions based on research and best practices.

Numerous interviewees shared their frustration with DEED implementing new programs without appropriately vetting and researching to ensure the initiative has worked in other states, is research-based, and is practical in Alaska. A majority of the comments mentioned not only the lack of detailed information provided on the Alaska Measures of Progress (AMP) reports as well as data accuracy issues, but also the unsuccessful rollout of the AMP testing.

Other examples of initiatives that may require additional review, evaluation, and vetting may include, but are not limited to:

- Tying teacher evaluation to student outcomes;
- The Steps toward Educational Progress and Partnerships (STEPP) process; and
- Student restraint training.

One interviewee summed up a trend found in several interviews by saying, *often times either the State Board or a legislator decides an initiative is needed in Alaska, but before doing any research on the topic, has DEED and the districts jumping through hoops to implement it.*

The lack of data and research to support the adoption, continuation, or discontinuance of programs and initiatives are similar to the lack of data to support the continuation of various DEED partnerships, discussed previously in this report under **Objective 5.**

Among DEED's four core services is to provide school effectiveness programs. Specifically, DEED assists school districts by providing programs, technical on-site and distance-delivery support, and early intervention services, all aimed at increasing graduation rates. The Public Works survey results show DEED staff mostly agreed that its school effectiveness programs help improve instruction, academic achievement, and graduation rates (agreement rates ranged from 33-38 percent). However, superintendent agreement rates for the same questions only ranged from 23-35 percent. Superintendents' comments included statements such as:

- *It is not clear as to what the school effectiveness programs are or how they help.*

- *The reports are perfunctory and a burden to small districts.*

- *DEED does not look for partnerships with districts nor for efficiencies, making its programs cumbersome and non-equitable.*

- *There has been nothing done that has or has not improved the effectiveness of districts and schools in recent memory. AK STEPP is always pointed to as a success, but it's nothing but a long list of objectives that sits in a computer. Nothing tangible is ever offered.*

The review team requested a list of program evaluations conducted by DEED over the past few years. DEED responded that they had not conducted any program evaluations.

Organizations external to DEED have demonstrated interest in performing evaluations. For example, in November 2015, the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) conducted a study pursuant to HB 278 Section 52 regarding Alaska teacher salaries and tenure. House Bill 278 sec. 52 instructed the Department of Administration to present to the legislature a written proposal for a salary and benefits schedule for school districts, and the Department contracted with UAA for the work. The results of the research led UAA to stress that they would not recommend a single teacher salary, as they could not be sure that implementing a single teacher salary schedule would actually result in rural districts being able to attract and retain qualified teachers. The report and research can be found at http://doa.alaska.gov/dop/HB278SchoolStudy/.

One DEED administrator remarked, *We have a state report card and we report out, but we don't come back and study trends to make any programmatic changes.*

Recommendation 10.5.1

Establish a program evaluation and accountability function within DEED to conduct the research and evaluations necessary to make data-driven decisions. (Tier 1)

The New Mexico Department of Public Instruction, a peer agency to DEED, has a Division of Assessment, Accountability, and Evaluation devoted to conducting program evaluations and studying trends in data to assist in program changes. According to the director of that division, the department has been able to conduct evaluations in-house without contracting with outside vendors to conduct the studies. She stated that they are currently evaluating the teacher preparation program and its relationship to student achievement.

The Texas Education Agency has a section of their website devoted to reports and evaluations conducted within or through their agency, found at http://tea.texas.gov/Reports_and_Data/Program_Evaluations/.

DEED should look within current staff in the assessment and accountability unit to determine departmental capacity to establish an Accountability and Program Evaluation Division. Whether DEED draws on existing staff, or hires a new director to oversee this function (with the new position tied closely to the current Assessment Division) there is likely to be a significant return on investment in cost avoidance; that is, significant funds will not be spent on initiatives without significant research and due diligence. For example, the AMP initiative alone cost the state in excess of $25 million for a five-year contract, with options for renewal every year. However, its value to the state was challenged and it was ultimately eliminated.

The executive director of the Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA), stated, *Of 35 school districts responding to the ACSA survey, about 56 percent said their district did not support continuing with the new standardized test. Nearly nine percent said they wanted to continue with the test and 35 percent said they needed more information.*[91]

When problems with AMP's implementation, data presentation, and public support became intractable, the University of Kansas-based research center with which Alaska had contracted to develop the AMP planned to subcontract another firm, eMetric, at their own expense to create more in-depth reports with greater value to educators. Subsequent to the review team's onsite visit on April 4, 2016, and after a second technical error paused standardized AMP testing across Alaska, DEED officials decided to eliminate the test immediately, a full year ahead of the previously envisioned phase-out.

An active program evaluation and research unit within DEED to provide solid information, research, and data on new initiatives could save the department a substantial amount of money on future initiatives by ensuring programs have been thoroughly researched and vetted prior to implementation. This unit could also provide a best practice database with the best evidence-based and research-supported curriculum, programs, and initiatives for district staff use. This could result in the utilization of proven practices and programs by the 54 school

[91]Alaska Dispatch News, Plans to Fix the Statewide Standardized Tests Involves Hiring Another Company, 1-21-16 http://www.adn.com/article/20160121/plans-fix-statewide-standardized-test-involve-hiring-another-company.

districts in Alaska, and likely decrease the number of disparate, competing programs in place.

10.6 DIVISION OF LIBRARIES, ARCHIVES, AND MUSEUMS (LAM)

Findings

The Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums is commended for its innovation in and commitment to providing training and education to local library and museum staff across the state. The State Library accomplishes part of this work through collaborative efforts with other libraries, such as the joint library catalog (an on-line multi-library catalog) and support for the Alaska Library Network (which facilitates group purchasing for libraries statewide). State Library staff also educate and train staff in local libraries on library skills and tools using in-person training, conference attendance, webinars, audio-conferencing, and through its Small Library Institute for Management, a week of "basic training" for local librarians (as well as similar program for school librarians).

The State Museum supports staff in local museums to help them in their efforts to preserve the history and cultural materials of Alaska. For example, State Museum staff host monthly "Museum Chats" (forums on various topics or question and answer sessions), field phone calls from local museum staff (often up to 20 calls per month) to answer their questions, and work with them to address their needs and issues.

All of these efforts are particularly valuable in Alaska, both due to the diverse needs in different locations, which range from needs relating to the acquisition, preservation, and access of materials of historic or cultural importance to the fact that local staff often are not trained professionals in their fields.

Meriting particular recognition is the 2014 federal grant LAM received to bring local collection and exhibit development staff from museums statewide to Juneau for extensive training. Local staff were brought to Juneau in three phases and learned skills such as how to pack, move, and track artifacts, build mannequins, and restore and organize collections. Not only did these individuals receive hands-on training that will take back to their local facilities, all of the work they did contributed to the State Museum's move to its new facility. By using this strategy, the State Museum was able to invest funding into real-life

training that would otherwise have been spent on movers and consultants. This model is very innovative and is now being considered a role model for other museums nationally.

Commendation 10.C

The Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums is commended for its innovation in and commitment to providing training and education to local library and museum staff across the state.

10.7 LAM: INTERNAL COORDINATION

Findings

The three main programs within LAM—the historical library, state archives, and state museum—have been largely uncoordinated, despite some complementary functions.

In the early 1900's, the historical library and state museum were together as a single unit. In the 1970's, they were separated and the State Archives were established. Years later, the three entities were brought together under one director in LAM. The director of LAM is appointed by the Governor and becomes the State Librarian; as a result, the director has had a strong library background. However, due to the specialized nature of each section, each has at least one specialized director: there are head librarians for the historical library and for information services, a head archivist for the State Archives, and a chief curator for the State Museum. The fact that each section has and needs leadership with distinct training and professional skills, and that each section has until recently been physically located in different facilities, resulted in sections that were managed and functioned largely independent of one another.

Superficially, this independence is natural as each section has distinct responsibilities and objectives. However, there are areas where the sections' work duplicates and/or complements one another and opportunities for collaboration and coordination have been missed. For example, each section answers reference questions from the public, but these services have not been connected. As a result, researchers at times need to visit multiple sites and contact multiple staff to obtain complete answers. Additionally, all the sections have conducted educational programming targeted at a variety of audiences, but their efforts have largely been uncoordinated.

The LAM sections are preparing to move into a new single facility in Juneau in June 2016. Interviews indicate that it was a major decision to physically combine the historical library and the State Archives. Although they have different missions—the State Archives keep state government records, the library collects state government publications and other documents and materials, and the museum collects and displays a wide variety of materials—they have many of the same physical challenges. A principal criterion for the new building was adequate and appropriate storage space to safely preserve materials, physically and chemically. Additionally, LAM hopes that co-locating sections will enable them to reach more of the public, and serve them more efficiently. For example, the public will access LAM services from a central reading room and a single reference desk, whereas historically there were two separate reading rooms and reference desks.

LAM staff also recognizes that the relationships between sections will continue to evolve after the move. All of the staff interviewed mentioned the opportunities for more collaboration and efficiencies, and the challenges they will face working to breakdown the division's historical silos. LAM leadership has already taken steps toward increased coordination and collaboration, including:

- Consolidating staff by closing the Anchorage library office and relocating those staff to the new building in Juneau;
- Creating a Curatorial Board comprised of section leaders and their seconds that meets regularly for planning and coordination purposes;
- Launching a strategic planning initiative in January 2016; and
- Aligning fees across all programs.

Recommendation 10.7.1

Continue strategic planning to revise the mission and core services of the Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums so they align with and support DEED's mission, and develop more useful performance measures to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of all three units. (Tier 1)

Strategic planning is a management tool intended to help organizations assess the current environment, envision the future, establish priorities, and use this information to guide decision-making. LAM launched a strategic planning effort in January 2016. Given the significant changes the division is undergoing with the

move, the upcoming year will be a good time to reevaluate its mission and core services and develop more instructive performance measures.

A common understanding of the division's mission and goals, and its focus and direction, will help LAM be successful in increasing collaboration and coordination between its sections. Several LAM staff interviewed for this project mentioned that the division's mission is to support lifelong learning. However, LAM's current mission does not mention lifelong learning; its mission statement is, "To provide access to government information; to collect, organize, preserve, and make available materials that document the history of the state; and to promote the development of libraries, archives and museums statewide." Its core services closely mirror its mission statement and do not mention lifelong learning either:

- Provide access to the Alaska State Libraries, Archives and Museums programs and services;
- Promote educational opportunities for the development of Libraries, Archives and Museums statewide; and
- Continue to collect and manage for the care of objects and documents that represent the peoples and history of Alaska.

Undergoing a strategic planning process will help LAM bring together its sections as they develop a common understanding of the division's focus and direction. If LAM's mission and core services are revised to include lifelong learning, it could help align the division with the other programs within DEED.

In addition to reevaluating its mission and core service areas, LAM should use this process to establish more meaningful and useful performance measures. Performance measurement is an important component in strategic planning. According to the Urban Institute:

> *Strategic planning looks ahead toward desired goals; performance measurement looks back at achievements. Combined, strategic planning and performance measurement form a circle—a continuous process of governing for-results... The strategic plan defines the performance to be measured, while performance*

measurement provides the feedback that keeps the strategic plan on target. The connection strengthens both processes.[92]

The division's current performance measures are primarily output based: the number of reference questions answered, the number of museum visitors, the amount of resources available on-line, the number of people trained, the number of acquisitions. Additional types of performance measures can provide useful data for program evaluation and decision-making. Best practice examples suggest that each unit should have at least one of each of four types of performance metrics: those measuring 1) inputs (resources used); 2) efficiency (costs per output); 3) outcomes (benefits or results); and 4) service quality (customer satisfaction).[93,94] Specific examples of potential performance measures include: staffing levels (input); cost per research request completed (efficiency); a comparison of students' understanding before and after participation in educational programs (outcomes); and the percentage of customers who rate their experience with LAM positively on customer service surveys (customer satisfaction).

New measures that could help evaluate LAM's contribution to public education might include the amount of direct assistance LAM staff provides to schools and classroom teachers; how many of its educational programs align with state curriculum; and the accessibility and utilization of on-line educational resources such as tutoring and digital archives.

The following resources may be helpful in selecting an appropriate framework for performance measurement:

---

[92] Dunsenbury, Pat. *Government for Results and Accountability: Strategic Planning and Performance Measurement.* The Urban Institute, August 2000. PDF file. Web. http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/alfresco/publication-pdfs/310259-Strategic-Planning-and-Performance-Measurement.PDF. Accessed February 13, 2016.

[93] *A Performance Management Framework for State and Local Government: From Measurement and Reporting to Management and Improving.* National Performance Management Advisory Commission, 2010. Web. http://www.nasbo.org/sites/default/files/APerformanceManagementFramework.pdf. Accessed February 16, 2016.

[94] Probst, Alan. *Performance Measurement, Benchmarking & Outcome-Based Budgeting for Wisconsin Local Government, Second Edition.* Local Government Center, University of Wisconsin-Extension, 2009. http://localgovinstitute.org/sites/default/files/Performance%20Measurement%20manual%20Volume%20II.pdf

A Performance Management Framework for State and Local Government: From Measurement and Reporting to Management and Improving, published by the National Performance Management Advisory Commission, and available at: http://www.nasbo.org/sites/default/files/APerformanceManagementFramework.pdf; and

Performance Measurement, Benchmarking & Outcome-Based Budgeting for Wisconsin Local Government, Second Edition, published by the Local Government Center, University of Wisconsin Extension, and available at: http://localgovinstitute.org/sites/default/files/Performance%20Measurement%20manual%20Volume%20II.pdf.

This recommendation can be implemented using existing resources.

Recommendation 10.7.2

Use the Curatorial Board to provide guidance and direction to the sections of the Library, Archives, and Museum division. (Tier 1)

As discussed above, LAM has already begun bringing section leaders together for planning and project coordination through its new Curatorial Board. Based on the results of the division's strategic planning efforts, the Curatorial Board should become a mechanism for implementing the division's direction and providing strategic guidance to sections. If lifelong learning becomes part of the division's mission, the Curatorial Board should continue its efforts to develop connections with the K-12 programs in DEED and/or its curriculum subcontractors, as well as with the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education.

This recommendation can be implemented using existing resources.

10.8 ARCHIVES SECTION AND RECORDS INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SERVICES (RIMS)

Findings

The State Archives Section, and Records Information Management Services (RIMS) within the State Archives, utilize best practices to determine what documents to keep and for how long.

The State Archives permanently preserves government records, such as legislation, governor speeches, major policy meeting minutes, annual reports, birth and death records, naturalization records, land plats, Supreme Court decisions, and attorney general opinions. The Archives does not collect personal manuscript records; these materials are preserved by the State Historical Library.

Records are maintained and archived so that they can be accessible for research and to protect the state from liability. For example, in recent years, many government documents have been needed in response to oil- and gas-related litigation; there was also a recent request from a Department of Transportation surveyor who wanted a 1963 letter someone sent the Governor because it was needed in a legal action pertaining to state lands. The majority of research requests come from the Alaska State Legislature, the Alaska Court System, the Office of the Governor, the Department of Law, and the Commissioners' Offices.

RIMS consults with state agencies to create records retention and disposition schedules for records requiring short-term (up to 10 years) or permanent (archival) storage. RIMS staff work with department Records Officers to update retention schedules every three years, although staffing reductions have caused them to fall behind schedule. RIMS is working with agencies on establishing standards for electronic records and moving toward greater electronic storage from creation to disposition.

RIMS works with staff in each state agency to develop their retention and disposition schedules. The schedules are based on statutory requirements, federal requirements, National Archives and Records Administration guidance, and the type of anticipated value: documents of administrative value (pertaining to the daily business of running government) and fiscal value (documenting the state's financial transactions) are typically kept three years; documents of legal value (documenting rights, policies, positions of an agency, contracts, and lawsuits) and those of historical value are typically kept longer. Six years ago, the Archives Section used findings from a Council of State Archivists national survey to determine that it was archiving significantly more records compared to other states. As a result, the section undertook a de-accessioning project and more than 10 percent of its holdings were disposed.

Retention decisions are documented in departmental and programmatic retention schedules. All retention schedules are approved and authorized by the relevant Division Director, Attorney General, Commissioner of the Department of Administration, a Records Analyst and the State Archivist. If there is an anomaly (such as wanting to keep materials longer than typically necessary), the reasons are noted in the plan. Many types of state records are similar, so RIMS creates standardized policies when possible.

Retention schedules are developed in collaboration with departmental staff and based on statutes, national guidelines, and peer comparisons. Therefore, Archives and RIMS staff are utilizing best practices to inform their decisions about the choice of materials to store and length of storage. Additionally, in their 2011 survey of state records officers, approximately 70 of respondents rated RIMS services as very good or excellent, and RIMS received no unfavorable reviews.

Commendation 10.D

The Archives Section and the Records Information and Management System program are commended for using best practices in making retention and disposition decisions utilizing best practices and departmental input, as discussed in the above findings.

10.9 NEW STATE LAM BUILDING

Findings

Prior to the opening of the new LAM building (projected for June 2016), each LAM function—libraries, archives, and museums—were housed in different locations. Approximately 20 years ago, State Museum staff began looking at long-term planning needs and realized their existing space would eventually become inadequate: it was too small to accommodate growth, storage was below the mean high tide line resulting in water seepage, and there were problems with insect infestations and asbestos. Over the years as discussions continued and plans evolved, they realized that they should not only address the needs of the museum, but also those of the state archives and historical library which were not purpose built, were undersized, and in the case of the archives building, was in physical decay. As a result, a vision developed of a space where all LAM functions could be consolidated.

In 2001, the land adjacent to the State Museum was purchased by legislature; in 2008 the architectural plans were completed; and construction began in January 2013.

The State LAM project, budgeted at $137 million, is the state's largest vertical capital project since 1968. The building is designed to meet LAM needs for 100 years. Not only will the building help address storage needs (it has 2 ½ times the needed collection space to accommodate growth), it will facilitate better coordination between LAM programs as they will be collocated for the first time in their history.

According to LAM's project website, *Even though LAM is a complex project and constructed in phases, the interagency partnership has produced project costs that will be lower than other facilities of this type constructed in Alaska or the lower 48.*[95] Savings are due to:

- Collaborative building program efficiencies: $6.6 million;
- Effective design and construction management: $3.2 million; and
- Building contractor services negotiated savings: $5.0 million.

Additionally, the planning team worked to involve the City of Juneau and the museum's neighbors. They presented to the Juneau City Assembly and worked with the Juneau City Planning Office to ensure the project would fit into citywide plans for pedestrians, sidewalks, and lighting. They also worked cooperatively with neighboring property owners to address an open stream on the property and discuss impacts on traffic flow to their establishments.

[95] *Project SLAM.* Department of Education and Early Development, Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums. Web. http://museums.alaska.gov/lam/slam.html. Accessed February 15, 2016.

Commendation 10.E

The Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums is commended for its long-term commitment and perseverance in seeking a new facility, its cost-efficient design work and project management, and commitment to working with the community and neighbors in project development.

10.10 NEW STATE LAM BUILDING: FACILITIES RENTALS

Findings

The new LAM building, also known as the Kashevaroff Building, is designed to be a state-of-the-art facility for collecting, displaying, and managing objects and documents of historical value to Alaskans. In addition to expanded exhibition and storage space, the facility will also have a classroom, multipurpose room, and public gathering places. These spaces have the potential to generate income to the state and increase public awareness of the facility and its services. This building could generate revenue for the state through facility rentals.

Many museums offer facility rentals as a way to generate income and increase public awareness. For example, museums in Alaska that offer facility rentals include the Anchorage Museum,[96] the Alaska Native Heritage Center Museum (Anchorage),[97] the Alaska Aviation Museum (Anchorage),[98] and the Fountainhead Antique Auto Museum (Fairbanks).[99] All four peer comparison states – New Mexico,[100] Montana,[101] North Dakota,[102] and South Dakota[103] – also offer facility rentals at their state museums.

---

[96] *Museum Rentals.* Anchorage Museum. Web. https://www.anchoragemuseum.org/about-us/museum-rentals/. Accessed February 15, 2016.
[97] *Facility Rentals.* Alaska Native Heritage Center. Web. http://www.alaskanative.net/en/main-nav/facility-rentals/. Accessed February 15, 2016.
[98] *Facility Rentals at the Museum.* Alaska Aviation Museum. Web. http://www.alaskaairmuseum.org/. Accessed February 15, 2016.
[99] *Facility Rental.* Fountainhead Antique Auto Museum. Web. http://www.fountainheadmuseum.com/facility-rental-en.html. February 15, 2016.
[100] *Imagine Your Event at a Museum in Santa Fe.* New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs. Web. http://www.museumofnewmexico.org/graphics/MNMfacilities.pdf. Accessed February 15, 2016.
[101] *Rent Our Facility.* Montana Historical Society. Web. http://mhs.mt.gov/about/facility. Accessed February 15, 2016.
[102] *Facility Rental.* State Historic Society of North Dakota. Web. http://history.nd.gov/facilityrental.html Accessed February 15, 2016.

Museum facilities may be rented for myriad social and business events. Museums often provide the option of renting different spaces in their buildings, depending on patrons' needs and the type of event. Spaces available to rent at other museums include exhibit spaces, function rooms, conference rooms, classrooms, lobbies, great halls, cafés, lawns, theaters, and auditoriums.

Under AS 37.10.050, state agencies cannot charge for services unless specifically exempted by statute.

LAM currently has the authority to charge for cost recovery for services it offers, such as photo research, photo use, photo and document copying, micrographic and microfilming services, and admissions at the two museums it controls. These fees are set and approved by the Board of Education, then ratified by the Governor's office. However, LAM does not have authority to charge for use of its building, except for specific hourly operational cost recovery for staff time.

Recommendation 10.10.1

Work with the legislature and State Board of Education to enable facility rentals at the new Library, Archives, and Museum building. (Tier 1)

LAM staff has begun discussing the possibility of and methodology for changing statutes to allow for facility rentals with the Department of Administration and the Department of Law. LAM should pursue legislative changes that would enable it to charge for a broad spectrum of services that might be associated with facility rentals. As this venture is entirely new to the division, the division will benefit from broad, flexible statutory provisions; otherwise, the division may have to seek amendments to expand limiting statutory language to address unforeseen developments or needs in the future.

Museums offering facility rentals often have staff dedicated for this purpose; some museums even have entire event planning teams. To accommodate facility rentals, LAM will need to develop policies, set rates, advertise, obtain appropriate insurance, and determine how services such as catering, alcohol, and music could be provided (possibly by retaining subcontractors). To offer facility rentals, LAM will likely need at least one additional part-time FTE.

---

[103] *FAQ.* South Dakota Department of Education. Web. http://history.sd.gov/faq.aspx. Accessed February 15, 2016.

10.11 COORDINATION OF LAM & DEED SERVICES

Findings

LAM has the potential to provide a wealth of educational resources, but collaboration and coordination between LAM and the educational programs within DEED is nearly nonexistent.

LAM provides some educational materials and programming independently of coordination with DEED, but its resources are limited and its efforts are not consistently tied to DEED's Teaching and Learning initiatives. The educational resources LAM currently provides include:

On-line Resources:

- Over 50 paid electronic subscriptions that are licensed for all Alaskans, including BrainPop and BrainPopJr (which provide short animated films, quizzes, and activities on a variety of academic topics) and Tutor.com (which provides live homework help); [104]
- On-line resources and courses for the public[105] and for state employees;[106]
- On-line museum exhibits;[107]
- Multi-library electronic catalog service;[108] and
- On-line digital archives.[109]

Early Education:

---

[104] SLED, Statewide Library Electronic Doorway, http://lam.alaska.gov/databases/a_z/
[105] Digital Literacy, Alaska KnOWLedge Center, http://lam.alaska.gov/c.php?g=358213&p=2418782 .
[106] Learning for Productivity, Alaska State Library, http://library.alaska.gov/is/info_services_training.html#TOL
[107] Online Exhibitions, Alaska State Museum, http://museums.alaska.gov/asm/online_exhibits.html .
[108] Alaska State Library, http://jlc-web.uaa.alaska.edu/client/en_US/asl
[109] Alaska's Digital Archives, http://vilda.alaska.edu/

- The Library Development Unit used grants to create the Ready to Read Resource Center in the Anchorage Public Library. The Center has over 250 reading kits containing board books, toys, DVDs, and games that promote early literacy (from birth to age three). Other libraries, day care centers, and parents can check out the reading kits; materials are mailed to borrowers across Alaska.[110]

Museum Resources:

- Academic and object loan programs where materials are shipped to teachers;
- Youth art programs;
- Traveling exhibitions; and
- Children's programs and classes for each new exhibit that target specific curriculum points and deliver classes here in Juneau (such as 8th grade social studies students).

Technology assistance:

- The Alaska OWL Program, which improves the computing capabilities of Alaska public libraries through bandwidth support for remote libraries, videoconferencing services for participating public libraries, and digital literacy training for library staff. Through this program, all 100 public libraries now have high speed internet and video conferencing capabilities111; and

- E-Rate consulting and application assistance (E-Rate refers to the Schools and Libraries Program of the Universal Service Fund which provides discounts to assist schools and libraries in obtaining affordable telecommunications and internet access).

In addition, with the opening of the new LAM building in June 2016, the division will be able to offer new facilities for remote education and broadcasting and Science On a Sphere® (SOS), a room sized, global display system that displays

---

[110] Ready to Read Resource Center, Anchorage Public Library, http://readytoreadak.org/index.html
[111] The Alaska Owl Program, Alaska State Library, http://library.alaska.gov/dev/owl.html

planetary data onto a six foot diameter sphere, analogous to a giant animated globe. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration developed SOS as an educational tool to help illustrate Earth System, including animated images of atmospheric storms, climate change, and ocean temperatures.[112]

Historically, LAM provided other educational services as well, including a school library consultant and a staffed education section within the museum that provided educational programs, internships, learning kits, and curriculum support across the state. However, funding for those employees was cut some years ago, and their responsibilities were either contracted out, or absorbed to the greatest extent possible by remaining employees.

School district staff had mixed reports about their experiences with LAM: some consider them a great resource, while others know little about them. Of superintendents who responded to the survey, only 34 percent agreed that LAM achieves its mission and fulfills its responsibilities. LAM staff who were interviewed consistently said that they would like to do more for schools, but have not been able to, due in part to a lack of collaboration with the rest of DEED. According to LAM staff, efforts to collaborate have been unsuccessful due to: lack of staffing resources in Teaching and Learning Support; the outsourcing of curriculum development by DEED; disinterest of DEED's K-12 programs in collaborations with LAM; and lack of staffing resources in LAM.

The educational programs in DEED do not appear to view or treat LAM as a potential resource. Evidence of this perception includes:

- During at least one interview with DEED staff outside LAM, it was suggested that LAM should be moved to the Department of Administration;

- When LAM asked the educational programs at DEED to participate in its new internal board so that LAM could provide better services to the K-12 programs and districts, they declined; and

[112] Science on a Sphere, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, http://sos.noaa.gov/What_is_SOS/index.html

- There are no links to LAM resources on the DEED educational program websites; the only link to LAM is on the DEED website is on the "About DEED" tab under "Department Structure".

Recommendation 10.11.1

Strengthen the coordination of LAM services with the Division of Teaching and Learning. (Tier 1)

To facilitate coordination between LAM and DEED's K-12 programs, LAM should commit half of an existing position to the role of K-12 coordinator and a teaching and learning support staff person should be assigned as a LAM liaison. As more resources become available, additional educational staff dedicated to K-12 support should be provided to LAM. Education is a natural function of libraries and museums. Museums often help teach or support the state, local or core curriculum, and are known to tailor their programs and exhibits to promote math, science, art, literacy, language arts, history, civics and government, economics and financial literacy, geography and social studies. According to the American Alliance of Museums, museums spend more than $2 billion a year on education activities, and the typical museum devotes three-quarters of its education budget to K-12 students.[113] In FY 2015, LAM distributed nearly $5 million in educational grants, including approximately $3.7 million in broadband grants, $950,000 for education programs in libraries, $285,000 in early literacy grants, and $64,000 for education programs in libraries.

There are countless examples of ways in which museums support K-12 education. A partial list developed by a research project in the UK includes:[114]

- Help teachers to deliver the curriculum by basing learning on objects, sites and activities;
- Help teachers to deliver across curriculums;
- Bring classroom teaching alive and access culture and heritage;
- Offer enjoyable, positive experiences for children of all ages and abilities in an environment where all children feel they can contribute;

---

[113] American Alliance of Museums, Museum Facts, http://aam-us.org/about-museums/museum-facts

[114] ABC of Working with Schools, How Can Museums Support Learning? http://abcofworkingwithschools.org.uk/getting-started/learning-in-museums/how-can-museums-support-learning/

- Schools and preschools can visit museums for led or self-guided tours and handling workshops;
- Museum staff can take museum collections out to schools;
- Loan materials from museum collections can go out to schools;
- Schools can work with museum websites;
- Museums can display children's work and involve schools in exhibition design;
- Museums can put on exhibitions/displays in schools; and
- Museums can offer support for homework projects.

Benefits to children can include:[115]

- Handling real and high quality replica artifacts;

- Developing thinking skills, including problem solving, enquiry, observation, empathy, and understanding;

- The attainment of learning outcomes such as knowledge and understanding; skills; activity, behavior and progression; enjoyment, inspiration and creativity; attitudes and values;

- Social benefits, e.g., team work, meeting new people/mentors; and

- The opportunity to participate actively as citizens and develop social skills with other people outside of the school environment.

LAM is an educational resource that the K-12 programs in DEED have only minimally tapped. With better coordination, and outreach and advertising to districts, LAM could provide additional and improved support for K-12 learners and educators. For example, LAM could develop: curriculum resource kits for teachers and classroom; more in-house programming that ties to K-12 curriculum; curriculum-based programs that are broadcast via its new facilities; and on-line resources that are better catered to teacher and student needs.

This recommendation can be implemented with existing staff.

---

[115] ABC of Working with Schools, How Can Museums Support Learning?, http://abcofworkingwithschools.org.uk/getting-started/learning-in-museums/how-can-museums-support-learning/

10.12 LIBRARIES ARCHIVES AND MUSEUMS: TALKING BOOK CENTER

Findings

The Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums (LAM) is commended for its cost-effective outsourcing of the Talking Book Center (TBC). TBC is a partnership between the Library of Congress' National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped and state libraries nationally. TBCs provide library services for patrons who are visually impaired or physically handicapped to such an extent that they cannot read standard print materials. If found eligible, patrons are sent equipment and then materials such as cassette audio books from their state library with free return postage. TBCs also provide downloadable braille and audio digital books, as well as large print books. Approximately 1,000 Alaskans use this service.

There is a talking book center in every state, each of which uses the same books and equipment. LAM did an analysis of the costs to the state for space and staff and calculated that the TBC costs approximately $300 per patron per year. LAM approached the Utah TBC program about providing services to Alaska patrons and was quoted a price of $145 per patron annually. LAM decided to use its grant funds to pay for a TBC contract with Utah and was able to eliminate two FTE and rental space needed for TBC materials. These changes enabled LAM to reduce TBC costs by approximately 50 percent. The Utah TBC program has approximately 3,000 patrons and a bigger collection, bigger database, and more librarians, so Alaska TBC patrons will have more resources at their disposal under this arrangement.

Commendation 10.F

The Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums is commended for its cost-effective outsourcing of the Talking Book Center, which will save the state money and provide additional audio book resources for Alaska residents.

10.13 CHART OF ACCOUNTS

Findings

The current DEED Uniform Chart of Accounts for Alaska School Districts does not adequately address 21st century technology and services.

Generally speaking, charts of accounts are designed to provide standardized account structures and promote consistency in financial data collection and reporting. The DEED Uniform Chart of Accounts for Alaska School Districts (commonly referred to as the DEED Chart of Accounts) was developed to establish a minimum reporting standard for Alaska schools and ensure that local districts comply with accepted accounting principles and standards as well as Alaska Statutes and regulations.[116] Ultimately, the DEED Chart of Accounts should help produce clear, consistent, and informative data for parents and policymakers regarding Alaska's school finance efforts.

An in-depth Chart of Accounts update has not occurred since 2000 when DEED modified account codes to distinguish School Administration (Code 400) and School Administration Support (Code 450) functions to comply with the state's "70-30 Rule." DEED staff members and local administrators confirmed that the Department's most recent updates to the Chart of Accounts provided only minor clarifications for school districts regarding allowable types of in-kind services (2012) and uses of state funding for pupil transportation (2014). During interviews, several local district business officials noted the ambiguity of technology codes as a common frustration. DEED could use some of the optional National Center for Educational Statistics technology codes as models in order to address this concern.

In recent years, there have been significant changes in technology and technology-related services that are not considered in the current DEED Chart of Accounts. In the absence of technology account codes, local districts note that they are now reporting IT and other technology purchases/expenses to DEED under a variety of accounting codes, typically under "Code 490 – Other Expenses." District leaders also note that there has been confusion when reporting technology-related expenses that have evolved in recent years, such as software programs that in the past have been "products" (such as software disks) but now may be annual software renewals (similar to subscriptions).

In interviews conducted for this review, local school business officials also noted that they have received contradictory guidance from DEED program (grant) staff and school finance staff regarding which funds to charge for some

[116] "Alaska Department of Education and Early Development Uniform Chart of Accounts and Account Code Descriptions for Public School Districts," 2014 edit. (p. 3)

expenses such as teacher tuition. DEED grant management staff report that they have a good working relationship with DEED school finance staff and endeavor to work collaboratively to provide consistent answers to local districts.

This is vitally important as inconsistencies in reporting greatly diminish local districts' and DEED's ability to monitor technology spending and trends to inform decision-making (a primary objective of the Chart of Accounts).

Recommendation 10.13.1

Update DEED's Chart of Accounts to reflect 21st century technology and technology-related services. (Tier 2)

While DEED staff believe their Chart of Accounts establishes a minimum reporting standard for Alaska schools, the minimum reporting standard is insufficient and should be improved.

Members of the Alaska Association of School Business Officials (ALASBO) are eager to work with DEED school finance staff to update the DEED Chart of Accounts. DEED should consider forming a small work group with representatives from both the state and local districts to recommend specific changes. When considering updates, Alaska should consult other state education agency models as a guide.

No direct funding will be required to implement this recommendation. DEED will need to allocate appropriate staff time to research and recommend appropriate DEED Chart of Account updates. Additional recommendations related to technology can be found under Objective 8.

Recommendation 10.13.2

Increase staff training on the DEED Chart of Accounts to create more efficient accounting processes. (**Tier 2)**

Given the continuous turnover of local school officials (discussed elsewhere in this report), DEED should regularly offer training and answer new local questions regarding its Chart of Accounts. This will be especially true as updates are made to the current account codes. DEED has developed a great rapport with local districts through its active involvement with the Alaska Association of School

Business Officials (ALASBO). This forum can continue to serve as a great platform for training and collaboration.

When updating the DEED Chart of Accounts, the DEED school finance team should also be sure to train other staff within the department, such as program and grant staff, who work regularly with local districts on finances. This will ensure consistency in answering district questions and generate the best (and most consistent) finance data for education decision-makers.

Many state education agencies have expanded their charts of account to include accounting codes specific to technology. For example, the Georgia Department of Education's Chart of Accounts addresses technology purchases/expenses under several account codes, including "Purchased Property Services," "Supplies," and "Property" as seen in **Exhibit 10-3** below.

EXHIBIT 10-3
GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION CHART OF ACCOUNTS
SAMPLE TECHNOLOGY ACCOUNT CODES

PURCHASED PROPERTY SERVICES	
432 Repair and Maintenance Services - Technology Related	Expenditures for repairs and maintenance services for technology equipment that are not directly provided by school district personnel. This includes ongoing service agreements for technology hardware (e.g., personal computers and servers, main frames...)
443 Rental of computer equipment	Expenditures for leasing or renting of computer equipment including CPUs, storage devices, printers, input devices, word processors, or other equipment needed for electronic computing.
SUPPLIES	
612 Computer Software	Expenditures for the purchase of computer software that has already been developed. Contracted services for developing software would be recorded in object 300.

616 Expendable Computer Equipment	Items purchased or Lease-Purchased with a per-unit cost of less than $5000, which might otherwise be classified as "equipment" rather than "supplies." Examples: Printers, Disk Drives, computers, etc.
PROPERTY	
734 Purchase or Lease - Purchase of Computers	Expenditures for the purchase or lease-purchase of computers including CPUs, storage devices, printers, input devices, word processing, or other equipment needed for electronic computing. Items charged here must meet the two criteria noted in object 730.
748 Depreciation Expense –computers	The portion of the cost of computers that is charged as an expense during a particular period. In accounting for depreciation, the cost of a fixed asset, less any salvage value, is apportioned over the estimated service life of such an asset, and each period is charged with a portion of such cost.

Source: Georgia Department of Education, 2015.

Additionally, the Georgia Department of Education provides a searchable chart of accounts online (available at http://archives.doe.k12.ga.us/fbo_financial.aspx?PageReq=FBOFinRevCOAR&fy=19 to assist local districts.

No direct funding will be required to implement this recommendation. DEED will need to allocate appropriate staff time to collaborate with local district partners.

10.14 PERFORMANCE OF MOUNT EDGECUMBE HIGH SCHOOL (MEHS)

Findings

The DEED-operated boarding school, Mt. Edgecumbe High School (MEHS), provides state-of-the-art learning opportunities for students. The primary role of the school is to provide a broad range of academic and extracurricular opportunities otherwise unavailable to students in home schools and isolated in other communities.

According to interviews with the school management, MEHS currently serves 400 students from 111 villages or towns throughout Alaska. Sixty-five percent of the

students in attendance meet the federal guidelines for free and reduced lunches. In addition to offering a full range of English, mathematics, geography, science, and computer science, robotics, team sports, and a wide range of electives (art, choir, drama, debate, and journalism). The school is well known for its whale and other oceanographic acoustics lab program in partnership with the Scripps Oceanographic Institute in San Diego and the Alaska Marine Science Symposium. In 2014-15, 98 MEHS seniors graduated; of those, 77 were accepted into colleges/universities, and 10 students were accepted to a technical program. In 2015, MEHS received the Bronze award by *US News and World Report* as one of the nation's high performing high schools.[117] Other achievements by MEHS in the past two to three years include:

- Completion of a revised teacher evaluation system as required by 4 AAC 04.200 Professional content and performance standards[118];
- A graduation rate of 98.5 percent (2015);
- 100 percent of MEHS teachers are rated as highly qualified; and
- Seniors were awarded over $600,000 in academic scholarships.

Commendation 10.G

DEED is commended for operating a high performing high school.

10.15 MEHS STRATEGIC PLAN

Findings

The MEHS strategic plan was last updated in 2012. The strategic plan lacks best practices components, and there is no evidence of the plan being monitored for how well the school is doing when compared to its goals. The eight goals of the current 2012-15 plan include:

---

[117] http://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/alaska/districts/mount-edgecumbe-high-school-agency/mt-edgecumbe-high-school-416

[118] History: Eff. 4/20/97, Register 142; 2/16/2013, Register 205
Authority: AS 14.03.015 AS 14.07.020 AS 14.07.060 AS 14.20.010 AS 14.20.020

1. Provide opportunities, instruction, and support for every student to achieve high expectations and reach their potential.

2. Provide an academic/residential cooperative environment outside the classroom that is conducive to improvement of academic skills and educational progress of our students/school.

3. Establish a residential environment that ensures communication, mutual respect, and collaboration while providing a safe, nurturing, and comfortable home satisfactory to all stakeholders.

4. Provide a comprehensive guidance and counseling program, available for every student.

5. Provide a wide variety of physical, enjoyable, and quality of life-improving activities in a recreational atmosphere, which enriches the lives and experiences of our students.

6. Provide an extra-curricular program that promotes leadership/ sportsmanship, high student participation in a variety of activities, and promotes the ideas and integrity of a model MEHS student.

7. Merge the most positive characteristics of individuals and groups comprised within the MEHS community to make us a wiser, stronger, and more caring educational institution.

8. Establish and maintain strong, healthy relationships with local, state, and global communities.

The eight goals above consist primarily of services that MEHS intends to deliver. Several are written in vague terms and none have an action plan tied to measurable outcomes to easily or objectively measure its progress or success in achieving them. There is also no benchmark document to indicate the school's progress on its goals. While the leadership makes periodic presentations to the State Board of Education, there has not been any presentation or report to the State Board on overall progress on the school's strategic plan.

The Public Works' review team's findings are echoed in the findings of an external review of MEHS conducted in 2014 by AdVancEd.[119] The report included statements such as:

> *The team found minimal evidence of ongoing actions to sustain the momentum (MEHS) created in 2012. Few staff members spoke of the vision and purpose and parent and the advisory board representatives were not able to articulate actions or communicate that the school has taken action to promote its goals.*
>
> *There is no clear evidence that all staff have been trained to understand, apply, and support the use of data to drive instruction and the team did not find evidence that teachers use student data to revise curriculum, assessment, and instructional strategies.*

MEHS staff indicated that they are using a school improvement template from the Sitka School District for the school improvement plan. Some staff members indicated the desire for DEED (or the State Board) to provide a best practices strategic plan template.

The review team received conflicting reports from staff and administration as to whether and how staff are engaged in providing input. Several staff interviewed were concerned that they had not been anonymously surveyed by the administration, nor had there been any type of needs assessment conducted to allow them to provide anonymous input into recommendations for the school's improvement. MEHS leadership, however, indicated that staff input was solicited in a variety of ways in small and large groups so as to promote discussion.

Subsequent to the review team's onsite visit, DEED provided information that stated the school's strategic plan is currently being updated and will be completed in the spring of 2016. In April 2016, following the presentation of the review team's finding that the strategic plan had not been updated, the MEHS website posts that the new DRAFT MEHS Strategic Plan has been completed and invites feedback on the plan no later than April 18, 2016.

---

[119] AdVancEd External Review Report of MEHS, April 2014.

Based on interviews and a review of documents, the review team does not believe ample time has been permitted to study data, involve stakeholders (including the State Board) and complete a new and effective (draft) strategic plan for the school. In reviewing the new draft plan, it is still lacking many of the components of an effective plan. There is a lack of data presented in support of the school's accomplishments under its current plan, and a lack of specific, measureable goals for the new plan.

Recommendation 10.15.1

Update the MEHS strategic plan to include data-driven, specific, measureable, attainable, realistic, timely (SMART) goals and ensure that the plan is well communicated to stakeholders, posted on the MEHS website, tied to a specific budget, monitored regularly, and reported to the State Board. (Tier 1)

A strategic plan that incorporates these elements will support MEHS in establishing a focused path to achieve its mission. Often, schools will achieve a level of success and then stall. Strong strategic planning helps administration and teachers get off a plateau and assists in building morale. Solid planning helps to avoid the pitfalls of short-term thinking and lack of unity.

MEHS should post the strategic plan on its website. The state considers MEHS a role model for other high schools and it would be helpful for other schools to see a well-written strategic plan.

A best practices strategic plan, at a minimum:

- Involves a wide range of stakeholders;
- Is data-driven;
- Includes research on best practices;
- Has specific, measureable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound goals;
- Has specific funding attached to implement the goals;
- Is well vetted; and
- Is clearly communicated.

A good example is the strategic plan of Pine View School, a public high school located in Osprey, Florida. The school's awards include:

- Ranked #11 U.S. High School by *U.S. News & World Report;*
- Combined average SAT score of 1,335 (out of 1,600); and

- Ranked #15 on Best U.S. High Schools list by *Newsweek.*

A copy of the Pine View 2015-16 improvement plan can be found at: http://www.sarasotacountyschools.net/departments/schoolimprovement/

Recommendation 10.15.2

Administer an anonymous needs assessment to MEHS staff to ensure that their voices are heard in making recommendations for school improvement. (Tier 1)

The State Board and DEED should ensure that MEHS staff are surveyed annually and that the outcomes of the survey are duly considered as the strategic plan is being written and updated.

Many schools use a free online version of a survey tool, Survey Monkey. This approach would avoid any implementation cost (beyond staff time) for this recommendation.

Recommendation 10.15.3

Establish a best practice database on the MEHS website to share best practices statewide. (Tier 2)

MEHS could share its success in initiatives such as support services for students, use of cultural studies to enhance lesson plans, and other unique strategies that may benefit other teachers statewide.

Teachers at MEHS stated that they do share best practices when they attend conferences; however, they also stated that travel funds to attend conferences have been cut, and therefore their attendance at conferences has been limited. Since MEHS is used as a role model for the state, staff should welcome the opportunity to share its successful practices and programs with other Alaskan high schools.

The above recommendations can be implemented with existing resources.

10.16 SPECIAL EDUCATION AND ACCESSIBILITY AT MEHS

According to records and the State Report Card, MEHS serves 11 special needs students and employs a special education teacher who serves students who are

enrolled in special education. The school maintains memorandums of agreement (MOAs) for educational testing and related services for those students needing related services. During the review team's onsite visit, several staff members interviewed were unaware that any special needs students were enrolled in the school. Other factors indicated that special education has not been appropriately prioritized at MEHS include:

- Special education teacher(s) were not included in the teacher focus group (our team requested a cross-section of teachers in various subjects and grade-levels);

- The website does not mention it is open to special needs students nor does it list special needs course offerings or related services;

- When describing the demographics of the school on its website, ethnicities were listed and free and reduced lunch percentages were listed, but there was no mention of special needs students listed. (Note: Since the release of the team's draft report, several of the MEHS website pages have been placed "under construction" and no longer display the same information.);

- The application does not have any place to indicate that a student has an individualized education plan (IEP); and

- The strategic plan does not mention any reference to special needs students' goals.

A tour of the facility verified that the school is not American Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant. A review of data indicates that prior deferred maintenance reviews and plans have identified the cost of MEHS becoming ADA compliant and the State of Alaska has opted not to fund this cost.

The MEHS application contains the following statement.

> *Mt. Edgecumbe High School is a state operated boarding school serving approximately 400 students in grades 9-12. Located in Sitka, potential enrollment is available to any student in Alaska who meets the state residency requirements for admission. Mt.*

Edgecumbe High School exists to serve students whose educational and/or social needs can be better met in an alternative residential institution as opposed to their present academic or living environment.

Students with physical disabilities would have difficulty attending MEHS because the school is not ADA compliant.

Recommendation 10.16.1

Place a higher priority on the acceptance of special needs students at MEHS and ensure that the website and all applications state explicitly that special needs students are eligible to apply, and consider adopting a goal in the new strategic plan geared to enhancing offerings and opportunities for these students. (Tier 1)

If the state wishes to showcase MEHS as a model school, enrollment should be open to students with special needs of all kinds, including differently-abled students. Facility experts would need to determine the cost of transforming the school to be ADA compliant if a student with a physical limitation (requiring ADA compliance) were to be admitted to the school. Given the significant investments being made in, and planned for MEHS (including $26.9 million for a new aquatic center with long-term maintenance costs of up to $1.0 million annually), and the cuts in DEED's curriculum specialists and programs, the state must ensure the appropriate prioritization of all capital projects.

10.17 ADMISSIONS CRITERIA AT MEHS

Findings

The scoring/rating criteria for admission to MEHS are subjective and inadequately documented. These should be revised to ensure a more objective and equitable rating system for student acceptance.

Exhibit 10-4 shows the admissions rating sheet for 2016-17. Each of the factors listed can be rated on a scale of 1-10. There is an application rubric that assists the scorer in assigning a score; however, in most of the categories, there are no criteria for the rating system. For example, under the category of transcripts, there are no documented, objective guidelines as to what differentiates a rating

of 5 from a rating of 10. Another category without an associated rubric for scoring is called achievement test scores. All factors are evenly weighted.

EXHIBIT 10-4
ADMISSION RATING SHEET FOR MEHS
2016-17

Student Name: _____ Grade: _____

Community: _____ District: _____

Using a rating scale of 1 to 10 (with 10 being the highest), rank the following for each student application.

Rate the following factors:

- Transcripts _____
- Achievement Test Scores _____
- The availability of a high school program in the student's home community adequate to meet the academic and social needs of the student.
  0=10 1-50=8 51-100=6 101-150=4 151-200=2 201-250=1 250+=0 _____
- Student Statement _____
- Parent Statement _____
- Adult Recommendation(s) _____
- Any particular requirements (emotional or family) that make the structured, residential setting of MEHS advisable for the student. _____
- The degree to which the student is expected to benefit from the academic program at MEHS. _____
- The degree to which the student is expected to benefit from the social program at MEHS. _____
- The degree to which the student will bring background experiences, skills, and abilities that will enhance the diversity or academic potential of the student body. _____

Social Comments:

Academic Comments:

Committee Member: _____ Date: _____

Do not write below this line – to be completed by Admissions Officer
(Divide total by 10 to get student rating) **TOTAL SCORE:** _____
10-7 Rating: Recommended for Acceptance
6-4 Rating: Need to Discuss
3-1 Rating: Recommend not to accept **APPLICANT SCORE:** _____

Source: MEHS Administration, 2015.

Analysis of the number of students applying and the number of students accepted shows that communities such as Anchorage, Sitka, Fairbanks, and Juneau had a substantial number of students accepted to MEHS, even though each of these communities have well-established K-12 academic college preparatory programs for high school students. For example, in 2014-15, 12 out of 21 applicants were accepted from Anchorage, 16 out of 18 were accepted from Sitka, and 4 out of 7 were accepted from Fairbanks. For the 2015 -16 school year, 16 out of 29 students were accepted from Anchorage, 3 out of 5 accepted from Juneau, 4 out of 8 accepted from Sitka, and 4 out of 7 students were accepted from Fairbanks.

Since MEHS is located in Sitka, it is also unexpected that 11 students from Sitka are not residing at home, but rather residing at the state-run and state-funded residential dorm. While individual circumstances may warrant this arrangement, it is noteworthy that the state is paying for students whose homes are in the same community to live in the school's onsite dorms. It was noted that the state pays a flat rate on the facilities and that having Sitka students living in the dorms is not an additional cost. Other areas of cost such as staff oversight, utilities, and food costs are still a consideration.

Recommendation 10.17.1

Revise the MEHS admissions rating sheet to include specific point ranges with criteria for each of the factors for acceptance to the school. (Tier 1)

MEHS should consider giving more weight to certain factors, such as the availability of a comparable high school program in the student's home community. One of the stated goals of MEHS is to provide a quality education for those students who may not have equal or similar choices in their home communities. MEHS continues to fill limited enrollment slots with students who reside in areas that enjoy a choice of established programs available to them, while a disproportionate of number students who live in rural areas such as Kotzebue, Alakanuk, Russian Mission, Barrow, and Marshall are not accepted.

10.18 MEHS AND SHARED SERVICES WITH SITKA SCHOOL DISTRICT (SSD)

Findings

Although MEHS and Sitka School District signed an MOU for school year 2015-16, MEHS and Sitka School District (SSD) do not optimize opportunities to share services that could result in greater efficiencies in operations and programs.

The schools are 2.3 miles apart. The Sitka School District is a K-12 public school district serving about 1,300 students residing in Sitka. The district has two high schools (Sitka and Pacific). The only courses shared with SSD, according to MEHS staff, are the automotive and mechanics classes. Also, students from MEHS are permitted to use SSD's swimming pool during certain hours.

Under its goal to establish and maintain strong, healthy relationships with local, state, and global communities, the MEHS strategic plan states that MEHS will *"stop the rivalry-battle of the bridge,"* presumably referring to longstanding tensions between the two entities. The plan states that both schools are 3A (high achieving) and that they plan to conduct a parent/student survey to see how they can best unite services with SSD. However, a review of documents and interviews indicates that a survey has not been administered and there is very little sharing of services.

There are a variety of areas in which sharing services and resources would enable MEHS to offer greater educational opportunities to students at lower costs. For example, due to budget deficits and enrollment numbers, MEHS had to eliminate two teacher positions in the 2015-16 school year. This resulted in a decrease in the business course offerings as well as eliminating all Spanish classes. MEHS does not have Advanced Placement (AP) courses, although it has a university dual enrollment option for students, nor does MEHS provide any courses through distance learning technology. Collaborative efforts between MEHS and SSD could be expected to mitigate some of these losses and/or create new learning opportunities. Unfortunately, historical tensions between the entities seem to present a barrier to exploring the potential benefits and cost savings of such opportunities.

Varied reasons were given for a lack of shared services or courses with SSD, including:

- *We are not on the same time schedules;*
- *There is too much tension between the two (entities);*
- *It just won't work;*
- *MEHS is stealing some of our best teachers;*
- *MEHS has 12 of our finest students enrolled this year, costing our district over $100,000 in FTEs; and*
- *MEHS serves 400 students on a $10.5 million budget; SSD serves 1,300 students on a $12 million budget. Why share?*

Both high schools are experiencing large class size due to reductions in teaching personnel and therefore fewer class offerings.

Neither do SSD and MEHS share key professional development offerings such as student learning objectives, curriculum development, and teacher evaluations.

To the students' credit, they have worked diligently to reduce student tension between the student populations despite cultural, economic, and school differences. Both schools' student councils have set up several initiatives and events to bridge the gap.

Recommendation 10.18.1

Establish a process for developing and adopting, a specific plan for shared services between Mt. Edgecumbe High School and Sitka School District, and begin to implement that plan. (Tier 2)

The State of Alaska is expending unnecessary funds on the duplication of training offerings and services, and students are missing out on courses that are offered at another public school less than three miles away. DEED can assist the two entities with a viable schedule that will allow the sharing of services and courses for students.

10.19 MEHS AQUATICS CENTER

Finding

MEHS is scheduled to build a $26.9 million aquatics center in 2016-17. These funds were voted by the citizens of Alaska in a General Obligation bond in 2010. According to numerous interviews, the school did not ask for a pool, nor does it want a pool or have a plan or funds for staffing, operating, or maintaining the pool. There is concern that the pool will be opened to the public, creating student safety issues and liability concerns and costs; it is unknown whether the city of Sitka will share any of these costs.

Students at MEHS already have access to the Sitka School District (SSD) swimming pool, if they choose to swim after school hours. On the other hand, the aging facilities of MEHS (constructed between 1939 and 1945) are in need of upkeep and capital improvements. Most of the classrooms are showing a significant need for repair or upgrade, as are the residential facilities constructed in 1988.

According to interviews with maintenance staff, the maintenance of the pool will cost approximately $700,000 to $1.0 million annually. Instead of a swimming pool, interviews indicate that the staff strongly requested an additional facilities' wing be considered since much of their campus is in multiple buildings. A new wing would help locate courses more centrally and help students avoid inclement weather when changing classes.

A representative focus group of students was questioned about the level of interest in the proposed aquatic center; it found that their hope is that this will allow them to have an underwater robotics class. Other students remarked they would rather have a new building allowing them to have more class space and class offerings than a new pool.

Recommendation 10.19.1

Cease expenditures on the planned MEHS aquatics center. (Tier 1)

The state could save funds by halting the construction of the pool and putting those state dollars to better use.

Among recommendations for reducing spending, DEED has recommended removing the career and college readiness assessment funding, eliminating

funding for the Parents as Teachers and Best Beginning Grants, and eliminating a considerable amount of Pre-K funding. Rather than spending $26.9 million on a swimming facility that has not garnered MEHS and community support, the review team believes the money would be better utilized by keeping these programs. (See **Objectives 12 and 13.)**

The implementation of this recommendation will require voter approval. Given the cuts to student programs and recent cuts to eliminate the instructional specialists in DEED; as well as cuts to college and career readiness assessments, the Parents as Teachers program, Pre-K funding, and broadband funding for the districts, the review team believes the state's portion of the cost of constructing and maintaining the aquatic center for one school could be better spent in restoring such programs directly related to student academic success.

10.20 MEHS GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Findings

The governance structure of MEHS has been an issue of speculation and discussion by many stakeholders for some time. The time may be right to warrant serious consideration of an alternate model.

There are several issues of concern with the current governance structure that include, but are not limited to, the following:

- There is little DEED or State Board oversight of the school, as evidenced by interviews with the leadership and staff at MEHS and State Board members as well as by the lack of a strong strategic plan that defines the oversight process;
- Staff and school leadership reported facing numerous issues in being a state-run school, such as purchasing policies that inhibit timely purchases;
- Little state direction exists on processing employee pay;
- Staff are encouraged to use procurement cards for purchases less than $3,000, however the procurement cards had not been cleared for use;

- There is a perception of internal rivalry and pay disparity that is negatively impacting morale. For example, state staff are paid $20 hourly to complete jobs similar to those performed by contracted staff for $14 hourly;

- As state employees, school staff are required to take leave five days during the academic school year whether they prefer to do so or not. Waivers from this rule are not granted;

- The Governor's Office has eliminated much state worker travel, thus prohibiting MEHS staff from attending conferences and professional development. Many teachers interviewed said they would like to attend the Response to Intervention (RtI) conference in Anchorage, but because of the "no travel" rule, they will not be able to benefit from the conference; and

- The State Board is required to approve the MEHS curriculum, however reports from the staff and from Board members indicate that the Board has not done so;

Some interviewees believed the school would better serve students if operated by the Sitka School District (SSD), as opposed to DEED. Others support a proposal that would transform the public school into one operated by the university and staff it with professors. (The latter would require legislative action and support from the university president and its regents.) According to the founder of ANSEP and who is also a vice president provost of the university, the idea is to allow MEHS students to graduate from high school with enough credits to earn their undergraduate degrees in three years. He contends that this could potentially save students a full year of university costs.[120]

One interviewee stated, *We are so far removed from DEED, we can fly under the radar. We actually would like to have more State Board interaction.* This statement was representative of other similar comments.

---

[120] University program proposes taking over state-run Mount Edgecumbe, *Alaska Dispatch,* February 1, 2016.

Another possible governance model to consider is the way many other Alaska entities are organized, i.e., as a quasi-corporation. For example, the Alaska Energy Authority, the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority, Alaska Gasoline Development Corporation, the Alaska Railroad Corporation, the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute, and the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation are all established as quasi corporations.

For example, Chapter 44.83 Alaska Energy Authority Sec. AS 44.83.010 legislative finding and policy [Repealed, Sec. 28 ch 18 SLA 1993] Sec. 44.83.020 created the Alaska Energy Authority. The authority is a public corporation of the state housed in the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development, but with a separate and independent legal existence.

Another example of a quasi state-operated entity is the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute, established as a public corporation of the state by Sec. 16.51.010. Housed within the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development, the Institute nevertheless exists independently of and separately from the state. The Institute performs essential governmental functions, exercising the powers conferred on it in statute. The Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute's governance structure is set forth as follows:

> **Sec. 16.51.020. Board of directors.**
> (a) The governing body of the institute is a board of directors. The board consists of seven voting members appointed by the governor. In making appointments to the board, the governor shall consider, but need not appoint, nominees presented by persons engaged in fish processing, the financing of fish processing, or commercial fishing.
>
> (b) Five members of the board shall be seafood processors: four of the seafood processors must have an annual payroll in the state of more than $2,500,000; one of the seafood processors must have an annual payroll in the state of $50,000 - $2,500,000. Two members of the board must be engaged in commercial fishing.
>
> (c) The board shall annually elect a chairman and other necessary officers from among its members.
>
> **Sec. 16.51.030. Term of office.** The members of the board appointed by the governor under AS 16.51.020 serve three-year terms and may be reappointed. Terms shall be staggered. An appointee to fill a vacancy

shall hold office for the balance of the term for which the appointee's predecessor on the board was appointed.

Recommendation 10.20.1

Consider changing the governance structure of MEHS to a quasi-corporation structure in order to enhance its efficiency and effectiveness. (Tier 1)

A quasi-corporation governance structure model can provide a separate board of control with closer oversight to operations than is afforded under the current system. Additionally, rather than forcing staff to adhere to some state rules that should not apply to them (such as vacation leave) a quasi-corporation structure may provide them the flexibility needed to operate efficiently.

While DEED agrees that they should review current MEHS governing bodies, empower the MEHS advisory board, and have the advisory board collaborate with the State Board, the review team recommends that in addition to these proposed solutions, an alternate governance structure should be studied and considered for MEHS.

While this recommendation will require legislative action, it is worthy of consideration due to the current cost and operational issues at the school. Cost savings or costs incurred cannot be predicted until the preferred model is selected.

This page intentionally left blank.

APPENDIX A: SURVEY

A Methodology

On November 24, 2016, surveys were emailed to: (1) Alaska school district superintendents; and (2) DEED staff. The surveys were identical, with the exception that the DEED staff survey had additional questions pertaining to DEED's fees and its statutorily defined responsibilities at the end of the survey. The survey was closed to respondents on December 10, 2015.

Response rates were quite high, yielding tight confidence intervals on the survey results. Surveys were distributed to superintendents from each of Alaska's 54 districts. Eighty-three percent of the superintendents responded, and 78 percent of the superintendents completed most or all of the survey. Because of the relatively small sample size, survey results for the superintendents have margins of error of ranging from +/-four to +/- seven percentage points. Surveys were distributed to 222 DEED staff members. Sixty-seven percent of staff responded, and sixty-one percent completed most or all of the survey. This response level provides a margin of error ranging between +/- three to +/- five percentage points. Responses from incomplete surveys are included in the review team's analysis, unless the individual noted that they did not have sufficient information or that they chose randomly, in which case the responses for those questions were not counted.

Exhibit A-1 on the following page shows the distribution of surveyed staff members and responses from DEED programs and divisions. Teaching and Learning Support Division staff comprise the largest group of respondents (40 percent), followed by Libraries, Archives, and Museum (LAM) staff (24 percent), and Mt. Edgecumbe High School staff (17 percent).

EXHIBIT A-1
DEED Staff Survey Distribution and Response

DEED Program or Division	Surveys Distributed	Number of Responses	Division Response Rate (percent)	Percent of Department Responses
Administrative Services	11	6	55	4
Commission on Postsecondary Education	7	2	29	1
Council on the Arts	6	1	17	1
Executive Administration	6	4	67	3
Information Services	5	5	100	3
LAM: Archives	10	9	90	6
LAM: Library Operations	28	19	68	13
LAM: Museum Operations	13	8	62	5
Mt. Edgecumbe High School	52	25	48	17
Professional Teaching Practices Commission	2	1	50	1
School Finance & Facilities	11	9	82	6
Teaching and Learning Support	71	59	83	40
	222	148		

The survey questions were grouped into the following broad areas:

- DEED Mission
- Administrative Services
- Leadership
- Stakeholder Relations
- Libraries, Archives, and Museums
- Boarding and Residential Schools
- School Effectiveness Programs
- Service Delivery
- Public School Funding
- Active Partnerships
- Fiscal Accountability, Compliance, and Oversight
- Statutorily-Defined Responsibilities

In each area other than Service Delivery, respondents were given statements and asked to respond on a five-point scale ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." Answers were grouped into three categories: agree or strongly agree ("agree"), disagree or strongly disagree ("disagree"), and neither agree nor disagree. Most statements were worded positively, so agreement generally indicates support or approval. After each set of scaled questions, respondents were encouraged to provide feedback relating to the topic in an open-ended question. If respondents commented that they did not have enough information to answer questions for a section, those responses were removed from the analysis.

In the Service Delivery section, respondents were presented a list of services provided by DEED to districts and asked to identify those DEED most excels in, those in which DEED has the most opportunity to improve, and those that are least valuable to districts. Responses are shown in terms of percentage of total respondents.

B Summary of Findings

DEED staff frequently chose "neither agree nor disagree" as their answer – often this choice was over half of DEED responses for a question – and seldom chose "disagree" or "strongly disagree". From their comments, it appears that these trends were partly due to not knowing about what other programs in the

department do, and partly not feeling qualified to judge what other programs do.

Due to the large number of respondents who chose neither agree nor disagree for many statements (often 40 percent or more), agreement or disagreement rates that by themselves may seem small (30 percent or less), may actually represent the majority of responses who opted for agree or disagree - especially if the opposite opinion received a very low response. For example, a common pattern of responses is less than 20 percent disagree, approximately 50 percent neither agree nor disagree, and just over 30 percent agree – making agreement the strongest positive or negative response chosen. Therefore, a complete understanding of the responses to a statement necessitates looking at all of the response rates, not just agreement or disagreement rates alone.

For most statements, both DEED staff and superintendents rated DEED's performance more positively than negatively. However, in almost all cases, DEED staff responded more positively about DEED's performance than did superintendents. The strongest responses in the survey came from superintendents: in response to statements saying school districts have adequate technology and DEED supports such technology, superintendent disagreement rates ranged from 63 to 65 percent.

The survey findings are summarized below. To simplify the comparison of responses between DEED staff and superintendents, some survey categories are grouped together.

Mission

DEED staff felt much more strongly that the department is meeting its mission than did superintendents. When presented with two statements that DEED was meeting the elements of its mission, the majority of DEED staff agreed: agreement rates were 65 and 64 percent and disagreement rates were 5 and 7 percent. However, while more superintendents agreed with these statements than not, the agreement rates were much lower (42 percent for both statements) and disagreement rates much higher (27 percent for both statements).

Administration

DEED staff and superintendents both felt positively about many aspects of DEED administration. Both provided largely positive responses when presented statements about:

- DEED's use of technology to improve agency efficiency and effectiveness;
- Whether there is duplication or overlap of services, programs, and functions, either within DEED or between DEED and another government agency or private entity; and
- The effectiveness and efficiency of the Division of Administrative Services;

Opinion was split nearly evenly as to whether or not DEED staff has adequate technology, as well as whether or not there are major bottlenecks in DEED administrative processes.

- Among DEED staff and superintendents, 40 and 38 percent, respectively, felt technology was adequate; 33 and 29 percent, respectively, did not.
- Among DEED staff and superintendents, 34 and 29 percent, respectively, felt there were major bottlenecks in DEED administrative processes; 32 and 40 percent, respectively, did not.

Divergent opinions were seen pertaining to the need for DEED to make improvements to agency practices and procedures to reduce regulatory burdens or restrictions: 34 percent of DEED staff agreed, whereas 69 percent of superintendents agreed.

Leadership

Respondents were asked about the leadership provided by DEED, the State Board of Education and Early Development (Board), the State Professional Teaching Practices Commission (PTPC), and the Alaska State Council on the Arts (ASCA) .

The strongest positive responses were seen related to the SCA (which received agreement rates of 55 percent from both DEED staff and superintendents about

its success fostering arts development for all Alaskans) and the Board (which received agreement rates ranging from 45 to 57 percent about the guidance it provides DEED and maintaining its role as policymakers). Disagreement rates were low for both entities.

The responses pertaining to DEED's leadership where also mostly positive, but weaker: agreement rates ranged from 31 to 59 percent about it providing direction, using long-range strategic planning, and using results-based measures. Disagreement rates were relatively low, up to 12 percent from DEED staff and 26 percent from superintendents.

The most critical responses pertained to the PTPC. When asked to respond to the statement, "PTPC enhances the professional performance of educators," agreement rates were 39 and 33 percent for DEED staff and superintendents, respectively. However, the disagreement rate from superintendents was 38 percent and there were a relatively high number of negative comments pertaining to PTPC's performance and role.

Stakeholder Relations

Respondents mostly replied favorably to statements pertaining to DEED's conflict resolution, communications, and its provision of services to schools. Agreement rates for the six statements in this section ranged from 41 to 66 percent, and disagreement rates ranged from three to 26 percent.

Related Programs

Related Programs include survey responses regarding Boarding and Residential Schools, Active Partnerships, and Libraries, Archives, and Museums. In response to statements pertaining to the provision of standards-based instruction, improvements in students' academic achievement, the provision of a safe and supportive environment, and compliance with state regulations and requirements at boarding and residential schools, responses were largely favorable: agreement rates ranged from 35 to 55 percent, and disagreement rates ranged from zero to ten percent.

In response to statements about DEED's active partnerships - if they improved standards-based instruction and academic achievement for all students - responses were mixed. DEED staff agreement rates were 44 percent and

disagreement rates were eight percent for both statements. However, superintendent views were more mixed: for both statements, agreement rates (36 and 33 percent) and disagreement rates (31 percent for both statements), were nearly equal. In comments, respondents noted that while the programs may be good, they do not service all students nor all districts.

Responses were also mixed regarding LAM. In response to statements that LAM achieves its mission and does its work in a timely, cost effective manner, DEED staff had agreement rates of 62 and 49 percent, but superintendent agreement rates were 34 and 27 percent. However, the comments about LAM were all favorable.

Services to Districts

Services to districts were evaluated in the sections on School Effectiveness Programs and Service Delivery. School effectiveness programs got stronger positive responses from DEED staff than from superintendents. Statements about school effectiveness generally, and about the Division of Teaching and Learning Support in particular, received mostly positive responses from both DEED staff (agreement rates ranged from 44 to 54 percent and disagreement rates were seven percent or less). Superintendents agreed at lower rates (ranging from 23 to 45 percent) and disagreed at much higher rates (18 to 38 percent).

With respect to technology services, responses were much more negative. Positive statements about school districts having adequate technology and DEED supporting such technology had agreement rates of 10 to 32 percent by both groups. However, disagreement rates for these statements ranged from 16 to 30 percent for DEED staff to 63 to 65 percent for superintendents – the strongest responses of the survey. The statement "DEED should expand it technical assistance through a regional delivery of services was agreed to by 32 percent of DEED staff and 48 percent of superintendents.

Section 8, Service Delivery, was the one section of the survey that was structured differently from the others. In this section, a list of 16 services DEED provides to school was given and respondents were asked to choose: three services that DEED most excels in; three services where DEED has the most opportunity for improvement; and three services that are of the least value to districts. Results are shown as the percentage of respondents who chose a particular service for one of the three categories.

The services that both DEED staff and superintendents largely agreed DEED most excels in were: Child Nutrition (which received votes from 48 percent of DEED staff, the strongest response rate from DEED staff in this category); and Teacher Certification (which received votes from 58 percent of superintendents, the strongest response for superintendents in this category). Other programs that were rated favorably by both DEED staff and superintendents were Federal Programs and Special Education.

The services identified by both DEED staff and superintendents as those in which DEED has the most opportunity to improve were Early Learning (which received votes from 32 percent of DEED staff, the strongest response rate from DEED staff in this category); and Instructional Support (which received votes from 36 percent of superintendents, the strongest response rate from superintendents in this category).

Five service areas were identified by both DEED staff and superintendents as being of little value to districts: School Recognition received the greatest number of votes for not being of value to districts by both groups: 62 percent of DEED staff and 52 percent of superintendents selected it. Other service areas that were considered of little value to districts by both groups include: System of Support for Priority Schools; Alternative Education; School Health; and School Safety.

The two groups demonstrated strongly opposing views on only one service area: Assessments. While 32 percent of DEED staff selected it as an area where DEED excels, 27 percent of DEED staff and 67 percent of superintendents selected it as an area with opportunity for improvement.

Funding and Financial Management

Funding and Financial Management were evaluated under Public School Funding and Financial Accountability, Compliance, and Oversight. Regarding Public School Financing, there were two sets of statements. The first related to DEED's oversight and management of school funding responsibilities. Both DEED staff and superintendents responded favorably, but DEED agreement rates (42 to 47 percent) were higher than superintendent agreement rates (28 to 33 percent). The second set of statements pertained to the performance of the Division of School Finance and Facilities. The responses to this set of statements is one of the few places in the survey where superintendents judged DEED's work

more favorably than did DEED staff: superintendent agreement rates were 67 to 72 percent, whereas DEED staff agreement rates were 43 to 46 percent.

Responses to statements about DEED's oversight of operating and capital budgets received strong agreement from DEED staff (37 to 42 percent) and very little disagreement (five to six percent). However, superintendents did not feel as favorably about these functions: their agreement rates were 28 percent for both statements and their disagreement rate was 18 percent. Statements pertaining to the process for developing capital projects had similar results, although when asked about equity in capital projects development, superintendents were even more negative, with 18 percent agreement and 36 percent disagreement.

Statutorily Defined Responsibilities

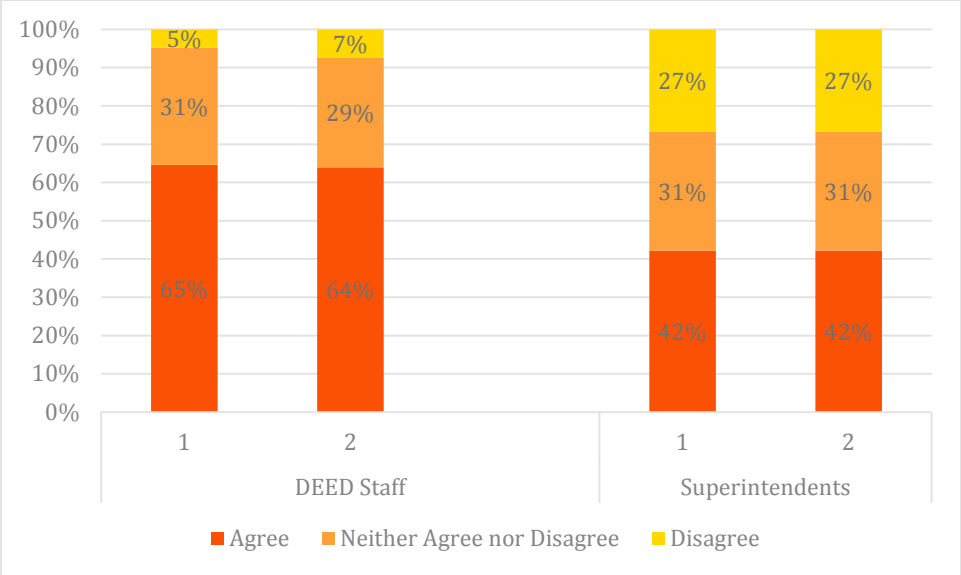
DEED staff members were asked to respond to statements as to whether they and other staff are aware of those responsibilities, and to whether DEED effectively performs those responsibilities. Responses were mostly positive, with agreement rates ranging from 49 to 63 percent and disagreement rates ranging from 7 to 14 percent.

C Findings Detail

DEED Mission

DEED's mission statement is, "To ensure quality standards-based instruction to improve academic achievement for all students." DEED's mission statement was presented in the survey and respondents were asked to respond to statements regarding whether DEED achieves each element of its mission. **Exhibit A-2** on the following page shows the survey results for each statement; full statement text appears below the exhibit.

EXHIBIT A-2
Survey Results: DEED Mission



Statement Text:

1. **DEED achieves its mission of ensuring quality standards-based instruction through its core services, goals, programs, and objectives.**

2. **DEED achieves its mission of improving academic achievement for all students through its core services, goals, programs, and objectives.**

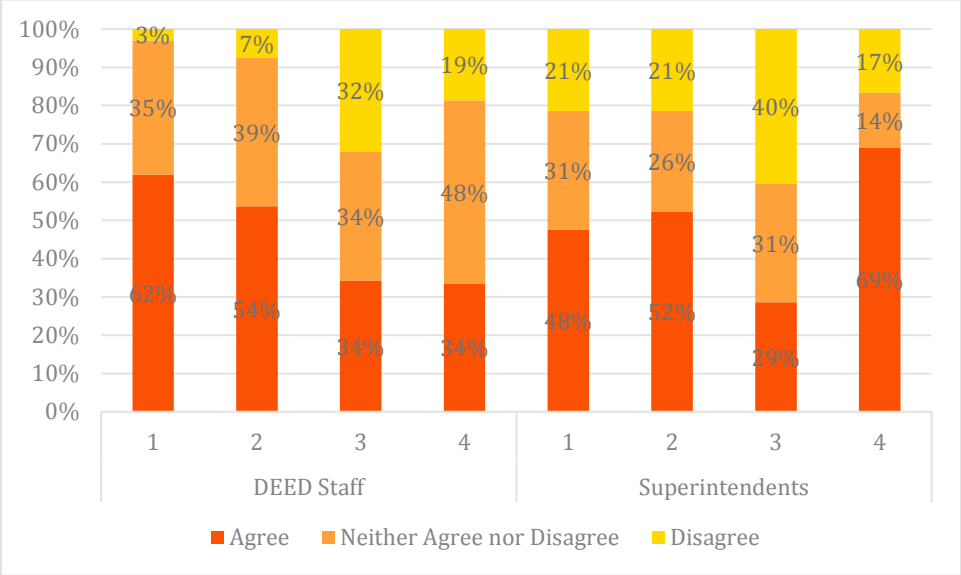
DEED staff felt it is being more successful in meeting its mission than did superintendents: 64 percent of DEED staff agreed DEED is meeting both of its mission objectives, compared to 42 percent of superintendents who agreed. Several respondents noted that DEED has a very dedicated staff and does a lot with limited resources – although some noted it could not meet its mission because of limited resources. Other respondents noted that DEED does not really improve instruction because it provides very little instructional support and has little input into instruction, but rather helps with accountability and compliance. There were several respondents from the Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums (LAM) who noted that the department's mission does not include LAM's functions.

Administrative Services

Respondents were asked to respond to statements about DEED administration, defined to include general oversight, processes, procedures, technology, and management decisions pertaining to DEED's daily operations. Some, but not all, of the statements in this section are specifically about the Division of Administrative Services. The statements focused on effectiveness and efficiency, redundancy, and technology, and are grouped by those topics in the graphs below. The full statement text that respondents replied to appears below each graph.

EXHIBIT A-3

Survey Results: Administrative Services – Effectiveness and Efficiency



Statement Text:

1. **DEED's Division of Administrative Services is effective at achieving its intended goals and fulfills its responsibilities.**

2. **DEED's Division of Administrative Services does its work in a timely, cost-effective manner.**

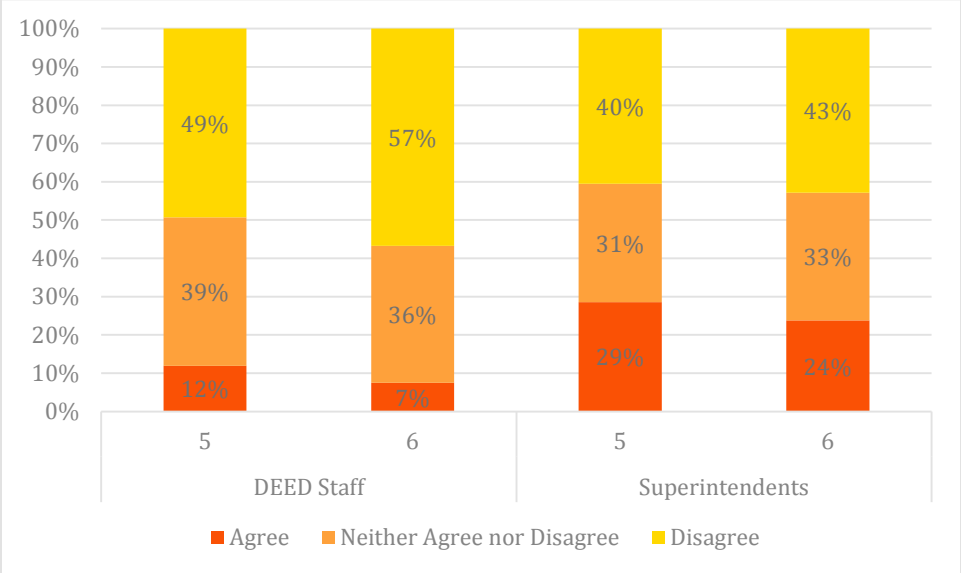
3. **There are major bottlenecks in DEED administrative processes that cause unnecessary delays.**

4. **DEED needs to make improvements to agency practices and procedures to reduce regulatory burdens or restrictions.**

DEED staff felt more positively about its administrative services than did superintendents in three of the four statements provided. The most pronounced difference was in response to the statement that DEED needs to improve agency practices and procedures to reduce regulatory burdens or restrictions: 34 percent of DEED staff agreed, whereas 69 percent of superintendents agreed.

Several DEED respondents commented that the new accounting system, the Integrated Resource Information System (IRIS), has created bottlenecks in procurement, purchases and payments. Concerns raised by superintendents included: redundant requests for reports and information; excessive compliance work that reduces the time and resources available to address student performance more directly; unreasonably short deadlines; and having the rules or interpretations of the rules change while districts are trying to comply with requirements.

EXHIBIT A-4
Survey Results: Administrative Services – Duplication of Services



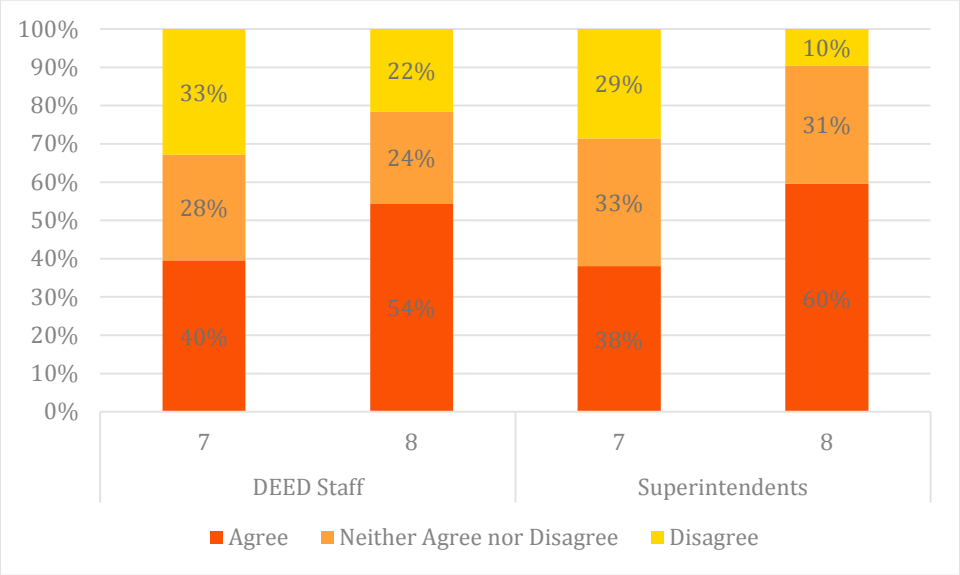
Statement Text:

5. **There is duplication or overlap of services, programs, and functions within DEED.**

6. **DEED's services, programs, and functions are duplicated by or overlap another government agency or private entity.**

Respondents generally did not feel that there is much duplication of DEED services, program, or functions, either within DEED or with other government agencies. However, DEED staff felt more strongly, with seven to 12 percent agreement rates compared to 24 to 29 percent agreement rates from superintendents.

EXHIBIT A-5
Survey Results: Administrative Services – Use of Technology



Statement Text:

7. **DEED has adequate technology to support its operations.**

8. **DEED uses technology to improve agency efficiency and effectiveness, wherever possible.**

Respondents from both groups felt that DEED uses technology to improve agency efficiency and effectiveness, wherever possible (54 percent of DEED staff

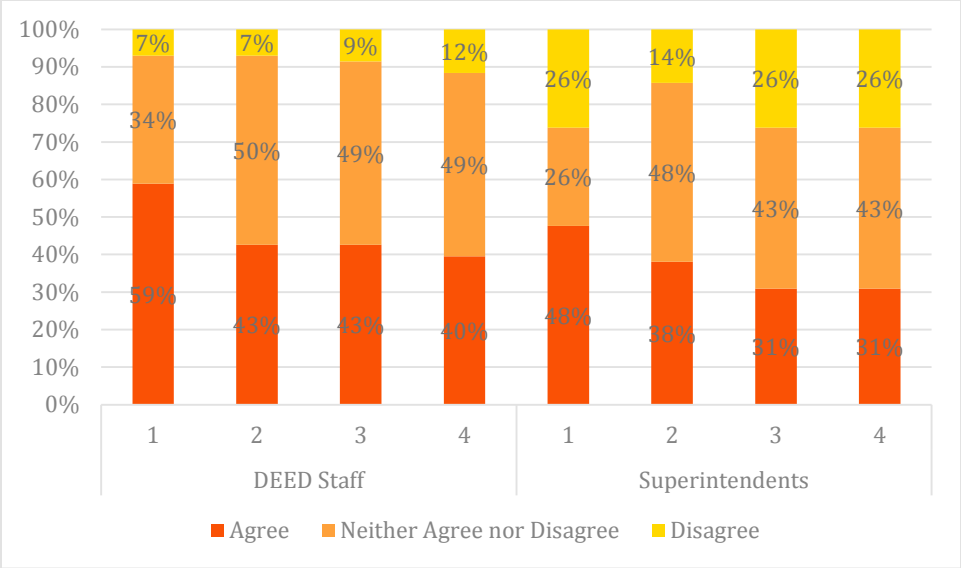
and 60 percent of superintendents agree). However, neither group felt as strongly that DEED has adequate technology: 39 percent of DEED staff and 38 percent of superintendents agreed that DEED has adequate technology to support its operations.

Many respondents provided feedback that although the department has been doing more to incorporate technology, there is still a long way to go. One superintendent noted that DEED needs to be aware that many of the districts in Alaska do not have the same ability to participate or use the webinars, web meetings, etc. Other comments regarding technology included: an over reliance on face-to-face interaction instead of using technology to provide support, resulting in excess demands for travel; delays by the DEED Information Technology section of Division of Administrative Services in deciding technology policy issues; a tendency to deny resources rather than helping people find a solution to their business requirements; and a lack of sufficient hardware and connections, especially in light of the recent upgrades in IRIS.

Leadership

In this section, respondents were asked to provide feedback on the multiple entities that provide leadership in education statewide, including DEED, the State Board of Education and Early Development, the Alaska State Professional Teaching Practices Commission, and the Alaska State Council on the Arts. The responses are grouped by those topics in the graphs below. The full statement text that respondents replied to appears below each exhibit.

EXHIBIT A-6
Survey Results: Leadership - DEED



Statement Text:

1. **DEED provides substantive direction and guidance to districts.**

2. **DEED uses its long-range strategic plan to guide its decision-making process.**

3. **DEED's results-based measures are able to demonstrate the effectiveness of the department's core services, goals, programs, and objectives.**

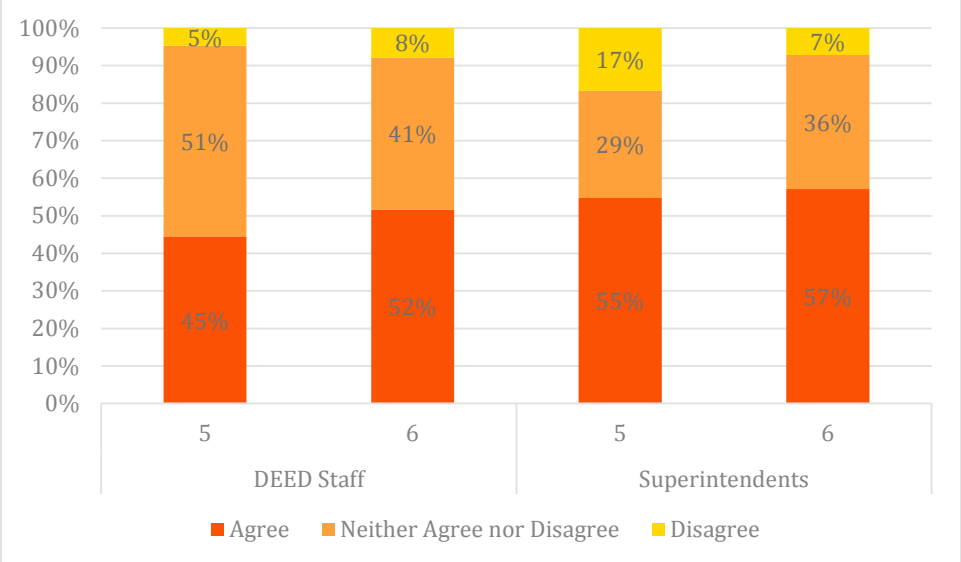
4. **DEED's results-based measures are able to demonstrate the efficiency of the department's core services, goals, programs, and objectives.**

Respondents from both groups neither agreed nor disagreed with statements pertaining to DEED's leadership at rates ranging from 26 percent and 50 percent. The majority of those who did respond agreed that DEED provides adequate leadership. However, those feelings were stronger with DEED staff than with superintendents: for all four statements, superintendents agreed at lower rates than did DEED staff. The statement, "DEED provides substantive direction and guidance to districts" received the strongest positive response, with agreement rates of 59 percent from DEED staff and 48 percent from superintendents.

- Despite the mostly positive results, several DEED staff members noted that in terms of long-term strategic planning, they did not know of any taking place or that staff is not included in long-range planning. Comments from superintendents included that: they did not know of any strategic planning at DEED; they do not see that resources are focused to support well-articulated action plans; and the failure to include the districts in strategic planning results in unfunded mandates from the state.

- Regarding results-based measures, one DEED staff member noted that although the department's results-based measures provide some very valuable information and data, they are not widely utilized or understood. Other comments from staff included that such measures are relied upon too heavily, causing people to circumvent the system in order to achieve false results; and that programs that have good data and provide a valuable services may be deemed as not meeting their intent and their funding may be reduced or cut.

EXHIBIT A-7
Survey Results: Leadership –
State Board of Education & Early Development



Statement text:

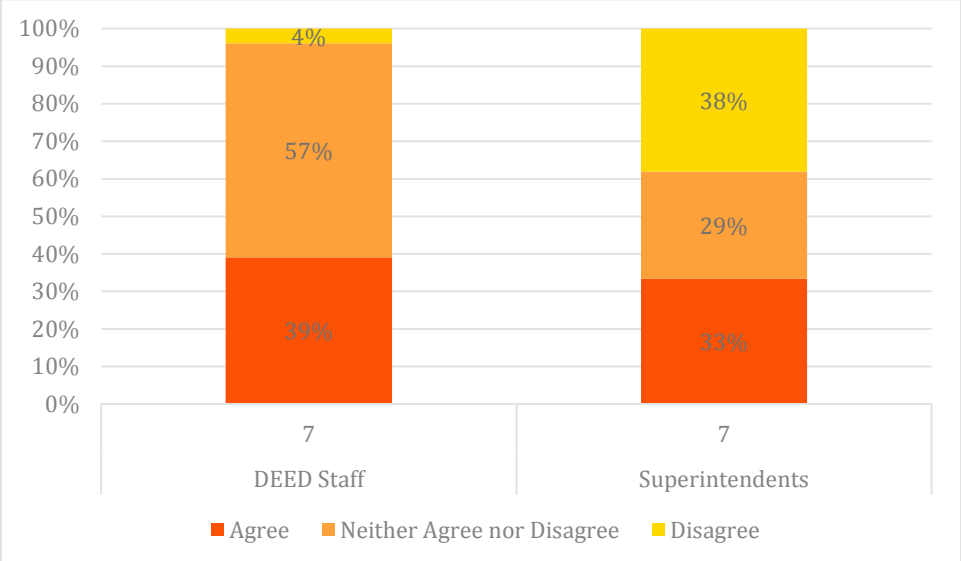
5. **The State Board of Education and Early Development provides the department with substantive direction and guidance for ensuring quality standards-based instruction to improve academic achievement for all students.**

6. **Board members maintain their role as policymakers and are not involved in the day-to-day management of DEED.**

Both DEED staff and superintendents largely felt that the Board of Education provides substantive direction and guidance and are not involved in the daily management of DEED; agreement rates ranged from 45 to 57 percent.

Comments regarding the Board were both favorable and critical. For example, one person stated that the new State Board of Education members seem to make good decisions, while others stated that it serves the will of the Governor (not the public, districts, families or children), and that it is it as rather ineffective and therefore unnecessary.

EXHIBIT A-8
Survey Results: Leadership -
State Professional Teaching Practices Commission (PTPC)



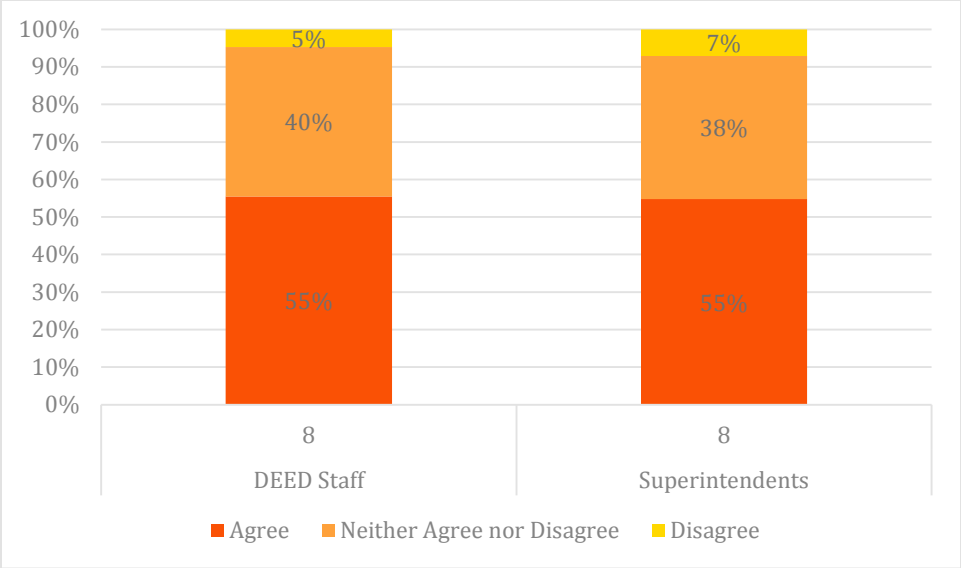
Statement text:

7. **Professional Teaching Practices Commission enhances the professional performance of all educators.**

There was divergence between DEED and superintendent responses to this statement. Although a similar percentage of both groups agreed with the statement (39 percent of DEED staff and 33 percent of superintendents), there was a large difference in disagreement rates: four percent of DEED staff disagreed, compared to 38 percent of superintendents. Selected representative comments about the PTPC are paraphrased below.

- PTPC is underfunded and understaffed, so they cannot provide leadership as they have difficulty handling the cases that come before them.
- PTPC has wonderful employees but they don't provide leadership.
- PTPC needs more "teeth" to address teachers - administrators who employ them - to teach long-term without a certificate.
- PTPC should play a more proactive role in facilitating workshops and webinars around standards for teachers.
- PTPC should be re located in Juneau as it is currently disconnected from the culture and operation of DEED.
- Educators in the state file false or exaggerated claims against colleagues and administrators in emotional reaction to conflict.
- PTPC regulations are vague and need to be reviewed and rewritten. Any time an administrator makes a complaint, or teacher has a complaint filed against them – even an unfounded allegation – their career is threatened, which dampens strong leadership and promotes maintaining the status quo in schools.
- PTPC is viewed as a "bully" that works directly for the commissioner. The organization has little respect from anyone surveyed.

EXHIBIT A-9
Survey Results: Leadership – State Council on the Arts



Statement text:

8. **The Alaska State Council on the Arts fosters the development of the arts for all Alaskans through education, partnerships, grants, and services.**

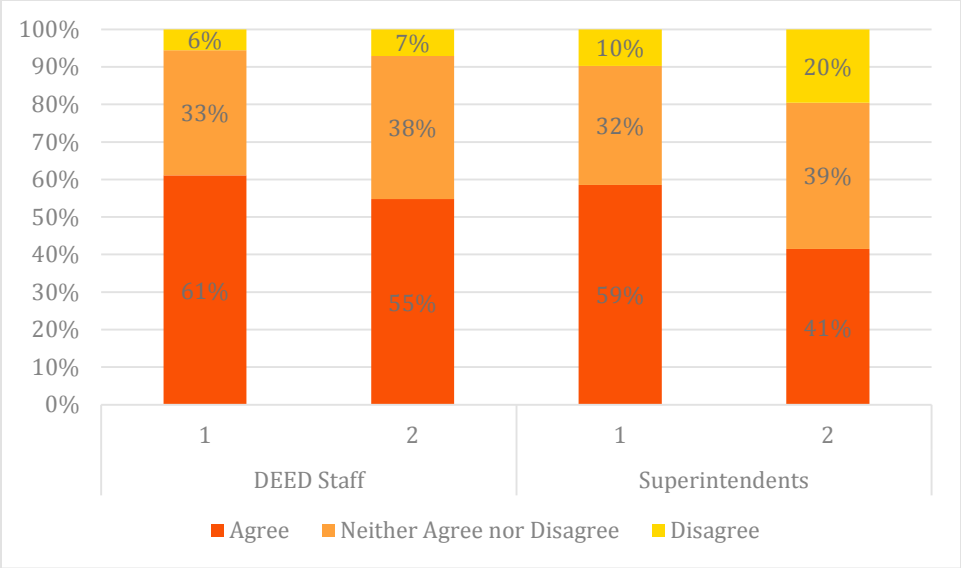
Fifty-five percent of both DEED staff and superintendents agreed that the Alaska State Council on the Arts fosters the development of the arts for all Alaskans through its services. Very few disagreed: only five percent of DEED staff and seven percent of superintendents.

Stakeholder Relations

Statements in this section sought out opinion on DEED's ability to maintain good working relationships with the state's school districts, school boards, legislature, other stakeholders, and the public. Statements focused on complaint resolution, communications, and the provision of services. Responses are group by these categories in the graphs below; the full text of the survey statements follow each graph.

EXHIBIT A-10

Survey Results: Stakeholder Relations – Complaint Resolution



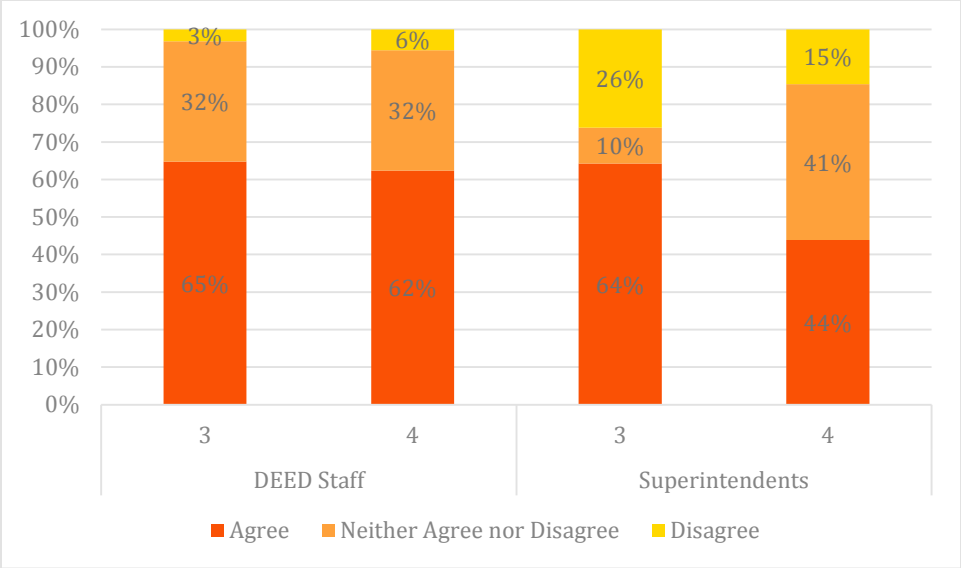
Statement text:

1. **DEED promptly addresses complaints.**

2. **DEED effectively addresses complaints.**

Both DEED staff and superintendents were positive about DEED's complaint resolution processes, although DEED staff agreed with the statements at greater rates (61 percent and 55 percent) than did superintendents (57 percent and 40 percent).

EXHIBIT A-11
Survey Results: Stakeholder Relations – Communications



Statement text:

3. **DEED effectively communicates with districts.**

4. **DEED effectively communicates with other constituencies, such as the public, school boards, legislature, and other stakeholders.**

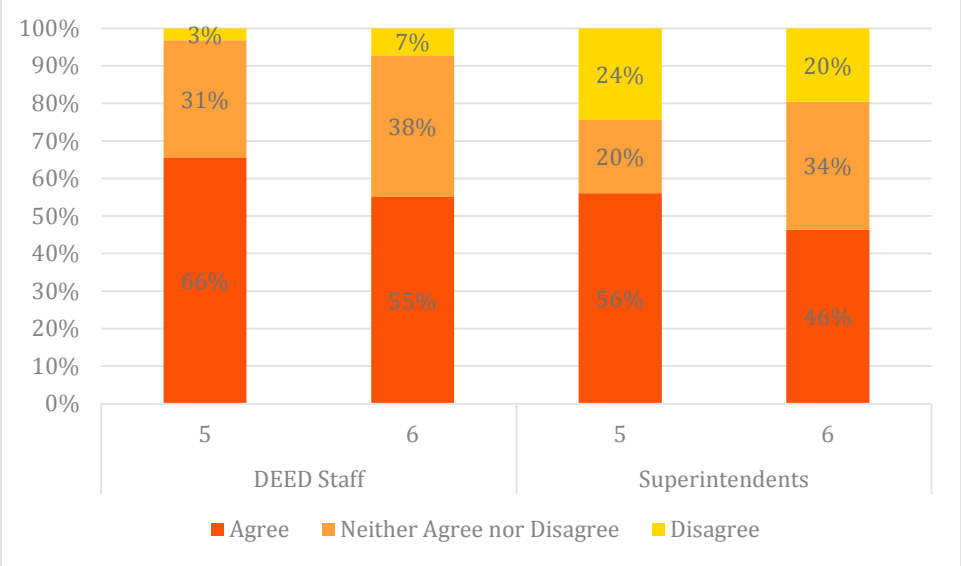
Both DEED staff and superintendents were positive about DEED's communications, although DEED staff agreed with the statements at greater rates (65 percent and 62 percent) than did superintendents (64 percent and 44 percent). However, several respondents provided negative feedback regarding communications in other parts of the survey. Selected representative comments about communication are paraphrased below:

- DEED uses bullying tactics as a way to attempt change.
- DEED administration is very top-down; there is little interest in bottom-up feedback, and no mechanism in place to collect such feedback.
- DEED staff is not told ahead of time when major announcements are made to the districts by the Commissioner or Department which puts staff

in a difficult position when districts then contact them with questions they can't answer.

- People who question a practice or decision are deemed "detractors."
- DEED uses its programs to intimidate districts. DEED does not try to work with districts but instead often uses its staff as "spies" within districts.
- When DEED is asked a question, they quote regulations; they don't try to work with you.
- The fiscal and facility branch of DEED is not responsive to questions; inquiries result in "standoffish" behavior from staff.

EXHIBIT A-12
Survey Results: Stakeholder Relations – Provision of Services



Statement text:

5. **DEED administrators provide quality services to schools.**
6. **DEED serves all schools and districts equitably**.

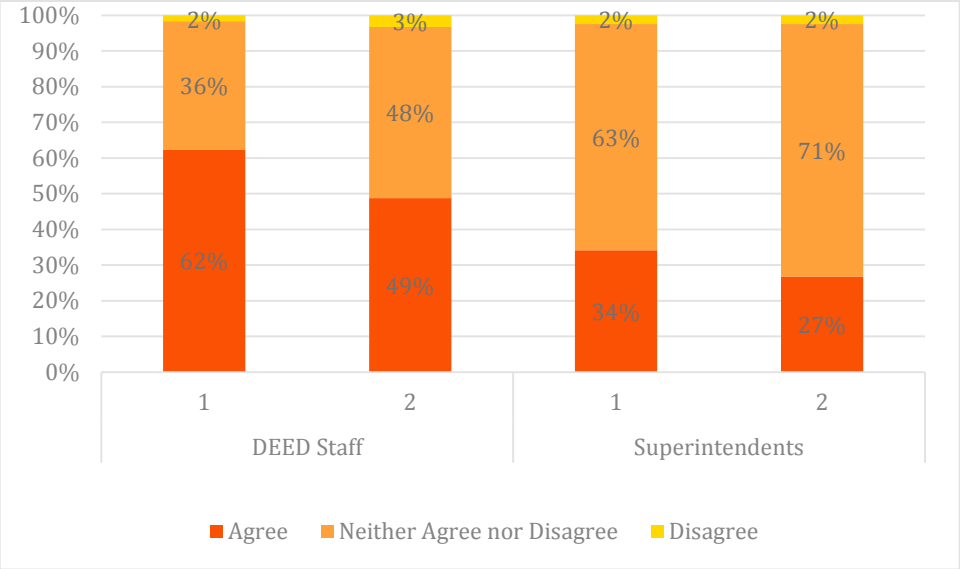
Both DEED staff and superintendents were positive about DEED's provision of services to districts, although DEED staff agreed with the statements at greater

rates (66 percent and 56 percent) than did superintendents (55 percent and 46 percent). However, while very few DEED staff disagreed with these statements (three percent and seven percent), superintendents disagreed at higher rates (24 percent and 20 percent). There was one comment relating to equity in service provision: a superintendent commented that road system schools receive more professional development, and that DEED does not try to deliver training to rural districts in innovative ways other than through teleconferences.

Libraries, Archives, and Museums

Respondents were asked to respond to statements about how well, how timely, and how cost-effectively the Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums (LAM) fulfills its mission.

EXHIBIT A-13
Survey Results: Libraries, Archives, and Museums (LAM)



Statement text:

1. **DEED's Division of State Libraries, Archives, and Museums achieves its mission and fulfills its responsibilities.**

2. **DEED's Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums does its work in a timely, cost-effective manner.**

Large numbers of both DEED staff and superintendents chose neither agree nor disagree with the statements pertaining to LAM, and very few disagreed (no more than 3 percent of either group). However, there were strong differences in levels of agreement. Whereas 62 percent DEED staff agreed that LAM achieves its mission and fulfills its responsibilities, and 49 percent agreed that it does so in a timely and cost-effective manner, superintendents agreement rates were 49 and 27 percent, respectively.

There were few comments about LAM staff and its work; most were from DEED staff and most were positive or indicated that the respondent did not know much about the division. Selected representatives comments about LAM are paraphrased below:

- LAM is very cost-effective. It constantly evaluates on-going costs, looking at alternative methods and other potential vendors to reduce costs. It is adopting new technologies and is not afraid to invest in technology or other resources that will save money or time, or improve service, over the long run.

- LAM has a small staff that performs a great deal of work.

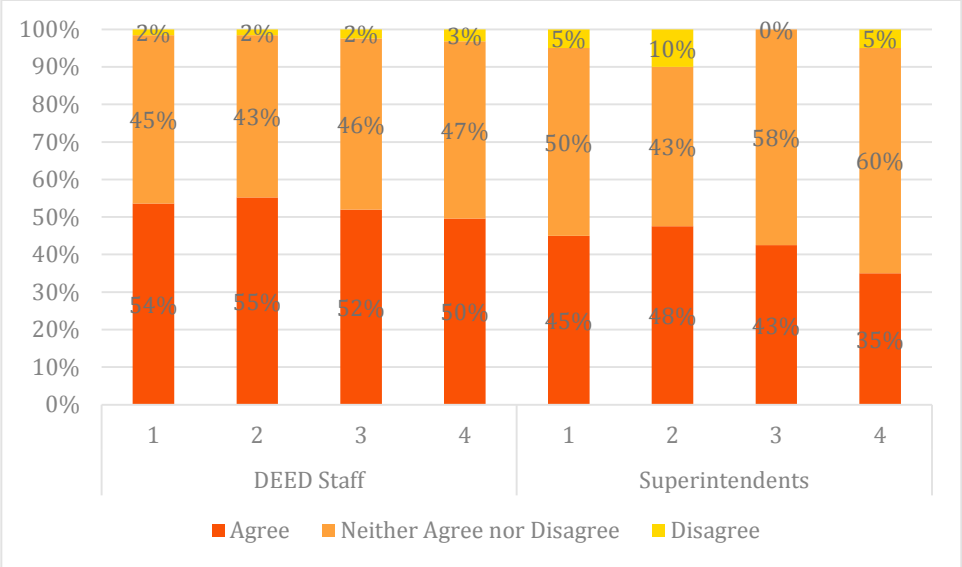
- LAM is well known for its quality personnel.

- LAM is understaffed but has high-quality personnel that have been very helpful to my small district.

Boarding and Residential Schools

Respondents were asked questions pertaining to the boarding and residential schools across the state administered by local school districts or DEED.

EXHIBIT A-14
Survey Results: Boarding and Residential Schools



Statement text:

1. **Publicly-run boarding and residential schools provide standards-based instruction through their core services, goals, programs, and objectives.**

2. **Publicly-run boarding and residential schools work to improve the academic achievement for all their students through its core services, goals, programs, and objectives.**

3. **Publicly-run boarding and residential schools provide a safe and supportive learning and living environment for all their students.**

4. **Publicly-run boarding and residential schools comply with all state regulations and requirements that apply to public schools.**

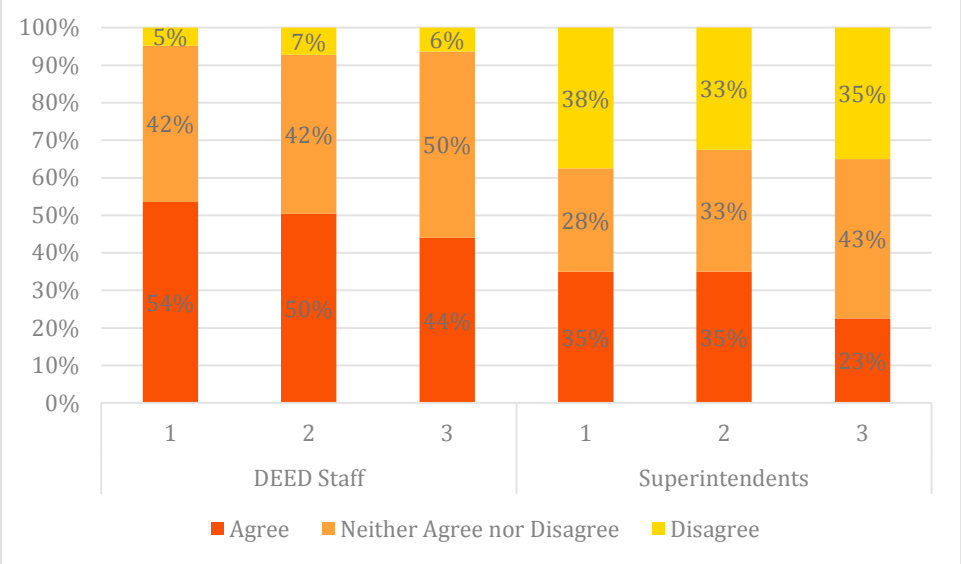
Respondents in both groups largely either agreed (35 to 55 percent) or neither agreed nor disagreed (43 to 60 percent) with these statements, with DEED staff having consistently higher rates of agreement. Very few respondents disagreed (zero to ten percent).

There were both positive and negative comments. The negative comments primarily focused on how residential schools drain resources and funding from small schools, not about the operation of the schools themselves, although one respondent felt that these schools do not comply with non-academic regulations, potentially putting children at harm and opening the state up for a lawsuit.

School Effectiveness Programs

One of DEED's four core services is school effectiveness programs. Specifically, DEED assists school districts by providing programs, technical on-site and distance-delivery support, and early intervention services in efforts to increase the statewide graduation rate. Respondents were asked about the program generally, about the Division of Teaching and Learning support, and about the use of technology. Responses are grouped by these categories in the graphs below; the full text of the statements respondents were presented is provided after each graph.

EXHIBIT A-15
Survey Results: School Effectiveness Programs



Statement text:

1. **DEED's school effectiveness programs help ensure quality standards-based instruction.**

2. **DEED's school effectiveness programs help improve academic achievement for all students.**

3. **DEED's school effectiveness programs help increase the statewide graduation rate.**

This section of the survey showed the greatest divergence between DEED staff and superintendent responses. DEED staff mostly agreed that its school effectiveness programs help improve instruction, academic achievement, and graduation rates: agreement rates ranged from 44 to 54 percent, and disagreement rates ranged from five to seven percent. However, superintendent agreement rates were much lower (23 to 35 percent), and disagreement rates (33 to 38 percent) were higher than agreement rates for two of the statements.

DEED staff comments centered on the lack of resources to address school effectiveness needs. While some superintendent comments also acknowledged the lack of resources, others were more critical of DEED's performance with given resources. Selected representative comments are paraphrased below:

- It is not clear as to what the school effectiveness programs are or how they help.

- The reports are perfunctory and a burden to small districts. Our district's "Steps Toward Educational Progress and Partnerships" (STEPP) report was accepted, but anyone who knows this school knows that the report is not achievable or realistic.

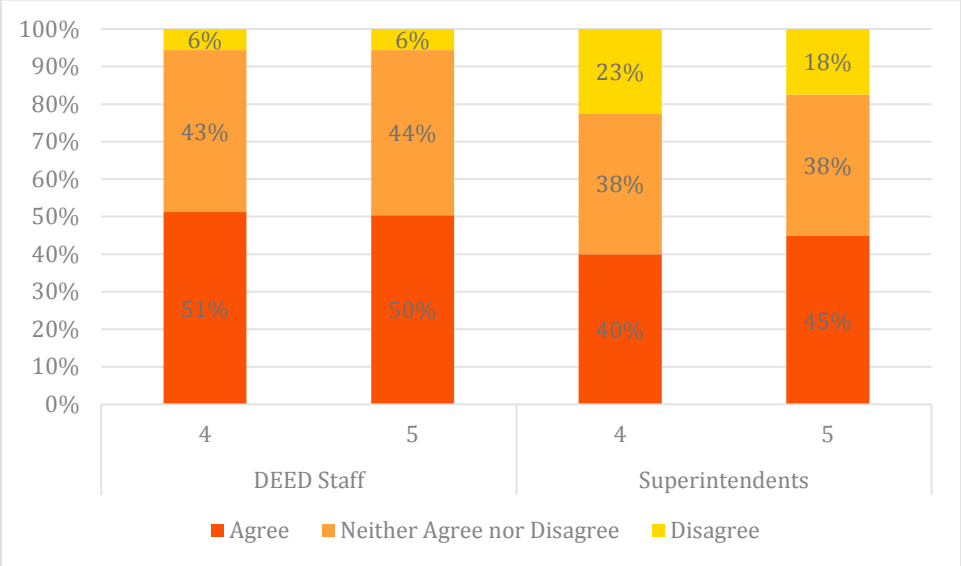
- DEED does not look for partnerships with Districts nor for efficiencies. Its programs are cumbersome and non-equitable.

- DEED has done nothing that has improved the effectiveness of districts or schools in recent memory. STEPP is pointed to as a success, but it is just a long list of objectives that sits in a computer. Nothing tangible is ever offered.

- DEED should be provided more support as the needs for their services is extensive and their assistance is always well received.

- DEED staff are good to work with and they appear to try their best; however, they are very focused on compliance which is only part of their core mission.

EXHIBIT A-16
Survey Results: School Effectiveness Programs – Division of Teaching & Learning Support (TLS)



Statement text:

4. **DEED's Division of Teaching and Learning Support achieves its intended goals and fulfills its responsibilities.**

5. **DEED's Division of Teaching and Learning Support does its work in a timely, cost-effective manner.**

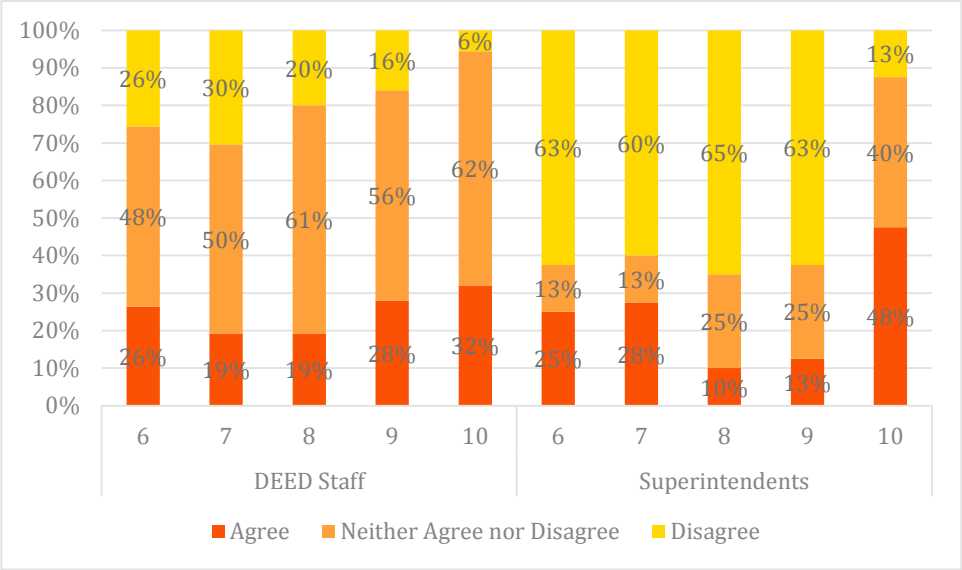
Similar to the results on school effectiveness programs generally, there were discrepancies between DEED staff and superintendent responses to statements about TLS. DEED staff mostly agreed that TLS achieves its goals, fulfills its responsibilities, and does its work in a timely, cost-effective manner: agreement rates were 51 and 50 percent, and disagreement rates were six percent. However, superintendent agreement rates were much lower (40 and 45 percent), and disagreement rates (23 and 18 percent) were higher. Selected representative comments are paraphrased below:

- Budget reductions have significantly impacted TLS, making it challenging for them to provide needed and requested support to districts.

- The culture of TLS has changed and now it is run more like a business and less like an educational entity. It is now very top down which has not been a good change.

- TLS works hard to fulfill its responsibilities and goals, but it is up to districts and schools to do their part to demonstrate effectiveness and achievement.

EXHIBIT A-17
Survey Results: School Effectiveness Programs - Technology



Statement text:

6. **School districts have adequate technology to support their operations.**

7. **School districts are up-to-date technologically.**

8. **DEED has a clear process for supporting districts' use of technology.**

9. **DEED provides sufficient supports for the effective use of distance learning.**

10. **DEED should expand its technical assistance through a regional delivery of services.**

The responses to technology statements indicate that although both groups of respondents see a need for greater technology and related services, those needs are felt more keenly by superintendents than DEED staff. The first statements are if the districts have adequate, up-to-date technology, if DEED has a clear process for supporting district use of technology, and if DEED has supports for distance learning. DEED staff agreement rates ranged from 19 to 28 percent, and superintendent agreement rates ranged from 10 to 32 percent. However, the big discrepancy between the two groups was in the disagreement rates: DEED state disagreement rates ranged from 16 to 30 percent, whereas superintendent disagreement rates ranged from 60 to 65 percent.

The final statement in the technology group was if DEED should expand technical assistance through a regional delivery of services: 32 percent of DEED staff agreed, whereas 48 percent of superintendents agreed.

Most comments from both groups acknowledged that technology choices are a local issue; that district technology levels vary due to resources; and a desire for DEED to have more resources to provide additional support in this area. Additionally, some superintendents commented that DEED does not seem to recognize or appreciate the added burden placed on rural districts to implement web-based student assessments and administrative functions where adequate connections and bandwidth are not available.

Service Delivery

For this section, respondents were presented a list of services provided by DEED to districts and asked to identify three that DEED most excels in, three in which DEED has the most opportunity to improve, and three that are least valuable to districts. Several DEED respondents noted that they did not know enough about the department's other service areas to provide a knowledgeable response, and as a result, they chose their answers randomly; these responses were removed from the totals shown below. For each of the three categories, responses are shown in terms of the percentage respondents that chose each service. Percentage totals do not total 100 because respondents voted for three programs in each category

EXHIBIT A-18
Survey Results: Service Delivery

Programs that received votes from 25 to 50 percent of respondents are highlighted in orange; programs that received votes from over 50 percent of respondents are highlighted in burnt (darker) orange.

	Services DEED excels in the most		Services DEED has the greatest opportunity to improve		Services of least value to districts	
	Percentage Who Chose Each Service		Percentage Who Chose Each Service		Percentage Who Chose Each Service	
Service Areas	**DEED Staff**	**Superintendents**	**DEED Staff**	**Superintendents**	**DEED Staff**	**Superintendents**
Assessments	32	20	27	67	16	17
Accountability	17	13	21	31	13	17
Student Information Services	11	15	14	13	22	14
Child Nutrition	48	20	3	3	12	22
Career & Technical Education	13	15	18	18	5	8
Early Learning	7	0	32	28	12	8

	Services DEED excels in the most		Services DEED has the greatest opportunity to improve		Services of least value to districts	
	Percentage Who Chose Each Service		Percentage Who Chose Each Service		Percentage Who Chose Each Service	
Service Areas	**DEED Staff**	**Superintendents**	**DEED Staff**	**Superintendents**	**DEED Staff**	**Superintendents**
Federal Programs	37	53	7	10	13	14
Instructional Support	18	23	28	36	3	6
School Health	9	5	15	8	15	31
School Safety	8	0	14	10	14	28
Alternative Education	7	5	18	21	24	36
School Recognition	6	10	9	3	62	53
School Support	15	10	22	21	9	6
Special Education Services	18	28	14	0	2	0
Teacher Certification	35	58	20	10	9	3

	Services DEED excels in the most		Services DEED has the greatest opportunity to improve		Services of least value to districts	
	Percentage Who Chose Each Service		Percentage Who Chose Each Service		Percentage Who Chose Each Service	
Service Areas	**DEED Staff**	**Superintendents**	**DEED Staff**	**Superintendents**	**DEED Staff**	**Superintendents**
Services						
System of Support for Priority Schools	10	8	17	18	27	28

There were four services that both DEED staff and superintendents largely agreed DEED most excels in:

- **Teacher Certification** received the most positive votes from superintendents, with 58 percent choosing it as one of the programs in which DEED excels the most; 35 percent of DEED staff also choose it as a strength. It got some votes for needing improvement (20 percent of DEED staff and 10 percent of superintendents), but few votes for being of little value to districts (nine percent of DEED staff and three percent of superintendents).

- **Child Nutrition** received the most positive votes from DEED staff, with 48 percent choosing it as one the programs in which DEED excels the most; 20 percent of superintendents also identified it as a strength. Neither staff nor superintendents felt strongly that it needs improvement (three percent of each group chose it), although 22 percent of superintendents did choose it as a program providing the least value to districts.

- **Federal Programs** received votes from 37 percent of DEED staff and 53 percent of superintendents for being a program in which DEED excels the

most. Neither staff nor superintendents felt strongly that this area needs improvement.

- **Special Education** received votes from 18 percent of DEED staff and 28 percent of superintendents for being a program in which DEED excels the most. It got very few votes for needing improvement (14 percent of DEED staff and zero percent of superintendents) and for not being of value to districts (two percent of DEED staff and zero superintendents).

- There were two services identified by both DEED staff and superintendents as those in which DEED has the most opportunity to improve:

  - **Early Learning** was identified as being of value to districts, but needing improvement. It was chosen by seven percent of DEED staff and zero percent of superintendents for being an area in which DEED excels. In contrast, 32 percent of DEED staff and 28 percent of superintendents chose it as an area in which DEED has the greatest opportunity to improve. The program got few votes for not being of value to the districts (12 percent of DEED staff and eight percent of superintendents)
  - **Instructional Support** was also identified as needing improvement (28 percent of DEED staff and 36 percent of superintendents), but of value to districts, (three percent of DEED staff and six percent of superintendents chose it for not being of value to districts).

- Five service areas were identified by both DEED staff and superintendents as having little value to districts:

  - **School Recognition** received the greatest number of votes for not being of value to districts: 62 percent of DEED staff and 52 percent of superintendents chose it. It also received few votes for being an area where DEED excels: six percent of DEED staff and ten percent of superintendents chose it.

  - **System of Support for Priority Schools** also received many votes for not being of value to districts (27 percent of DEED staff and 28 percent of superintendents chose it), and few votes for being an area where

DEED excels (ten percent of DEED staff and eight percent of superintendents chose it).

- **Alternative Education**, **School Health**, and **School Safety** all received many votes from superintendents for not being of value to districts (36, 31, and 28 percent, respectively), and few votes for being an area where DEED excels by either DEED staff (seven, nine, and eight percent, respectively) or superintendents (five, five, and zero percent, respectively).

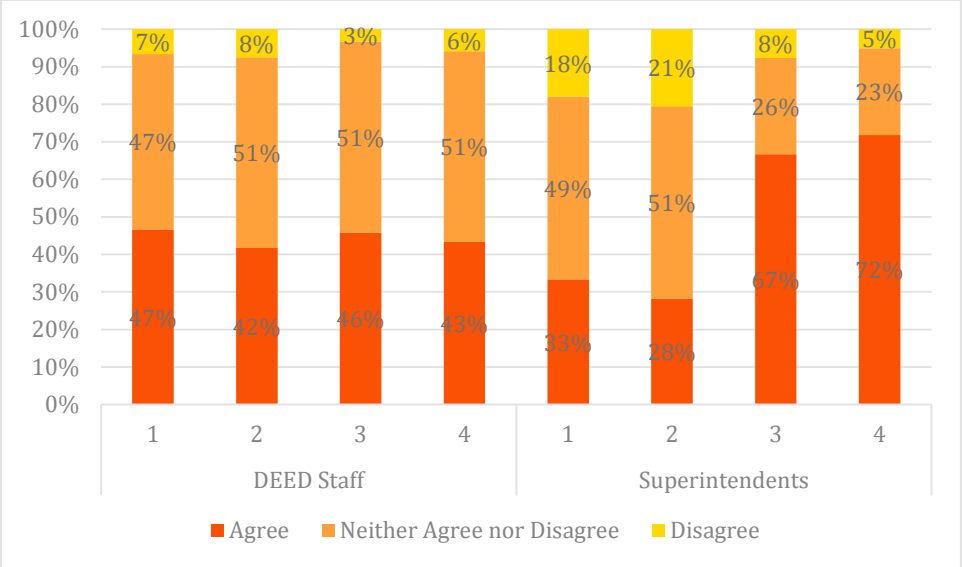
- There was one service that received mixed responses: **Assessments.**

  - Thirty-two percent of DEED staff selected assessments as an area where DEED excels, but 27 percent of DEED staff and 67 percent of superintendents selected it as an area with opportunity for improvement.

Public School Funding

One of DEED's four core services is Public School Funding. Specifically, DEED is supposed to ensure that funding is appropriately distributed to recipients based on legislative appropriation and by statute and in accordance with the foundation formula, other formula programs, or legislative intent for funding outside the primary funding formulas. Respondents were presented a series of statements regarding whether public school funding assists with instruction and student achievement, and whether the Division of School Finance and Facilities is meeting is goals and responsibilities in a timely and cost-effective manner.

EXHIBIT A-19



Survey Results: Public School Funding

Statement text:

1. **DEED's oversight and management of school funding responsibilities helps ensure quality standards-based instruction.**

2. **DEED's oversight and management of school funding responsibilities helps improve academic achievement for all students.**

3. **DEED's Division of School Finance and Facilities achieves its intended goals and fulfills its responsibilities.**

4. **DEED's Division of School Finance and Facilities does its work in a timely, cost-effective manner.**

The first two statements address DEED oversight and management of school funding responsibilities. For these statements, DEED staff agreed at stronger rates (47 and 42 percent) than did superintendents (33 and 28 percent). However, for the last two statements, which addressed work of the Division of School Finance and Facilities, superintendents agreed at stronger rates (67 and 72 percent) than did DEED staff (46 and 43 percent). This is one of the only instances in the survey where superintendents rated DEED's services better than did DEED staff.

Selected representative comments from respondents are paraphrased below:

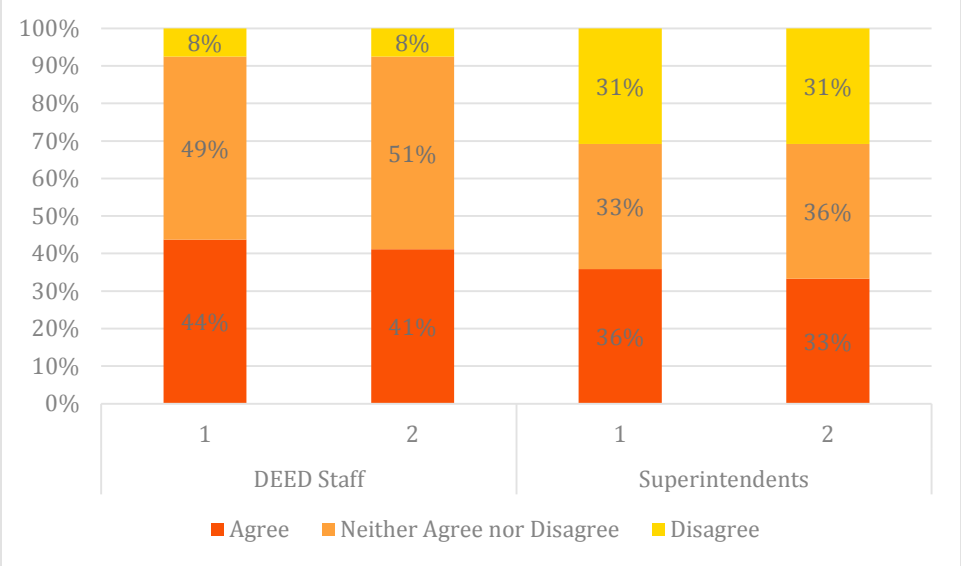
- Funding oversight and distribution are technically managed very well.
- These services do not tie to student achievement.
- DEED's system is very wasteful. Fund distribution is neither fair nor adequate. Some schools appear to have money to waste, while others struggle to purchase basic supplies.
- Finance and Facilities provides roadblocks. DEED has forgotten that its customer is school districts.

- Although operational monies are managed well, it seems that when it comes to legislative grants and special programs, DEED helps those with whom it's "chummy."

Active Partnerships

One of DEED's four core services is active partnerships. DEED provides opportunities for collaboration with government entities, and other public and private organizations to engage in active partnerships in pursuit of state educational goals.

EXHIBIT A-20
Survey Results: Active Partnerships



Statement text:

1. **DEED's active partnerships help ensure quality standards-based instruction.**

2. **DEED's active partnerships help improve academic achievement for all students.**

One of DEED's four core services is active partnerships. DEED provides opportunities for collaboration with government entities, and other public and

private organizations to engage in active partnerships in pursuit of state educational goals. Respondents were presented a list of DEED's three active partnerships and asked to respond to statements about them.

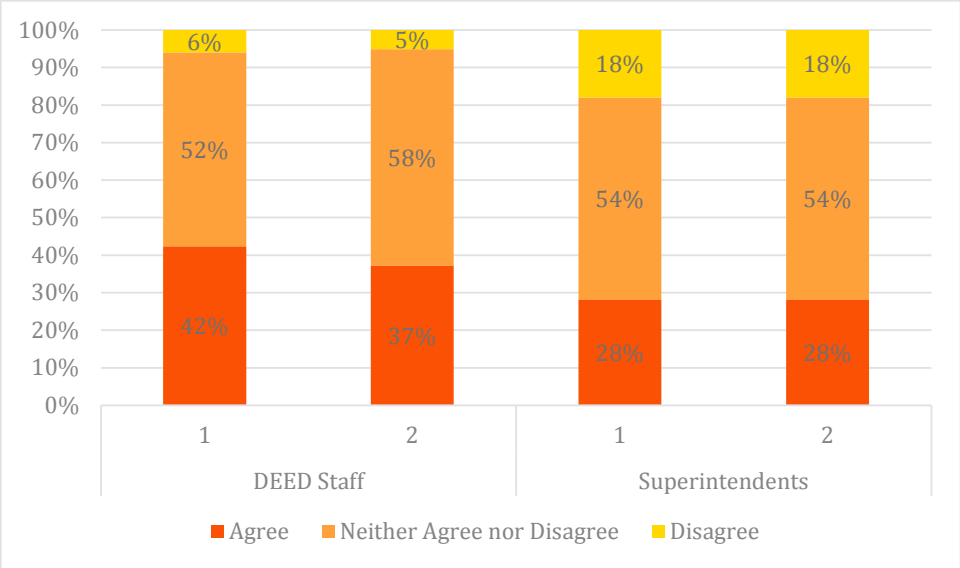
DEED staff strongly agreed that the partnerships benefit instruction and student achievement: 44 and 41 percent agreement rates and eight percent disagreement rates. However, superintendents did not feel as strongly: superintendent agreement rates were 36 and 33 percent and disagreement rates were 31 percent. Several comments from respondents from both groups noted that while the programs might be good, they do not serve all students nor all districts.

Fiscal Accountability, Compliance, and Oversight

One of DEED's four core services is fiscal accountability, compliance and oversight. Specifically, DEED is supposed to provide fiscal accountability, compliance and oversight of its operating and capital budgets and programs. Respondents were asked to respond to statements pertaining to operating and capital budgets, capital projects, and the collection of fees, conduction of inspections, enforcement of state law, and/or the imposition of penalties. Responses are grouped in these categories in the graphs below. The full text of the statements presented to respondents is provided below each graph.

EXHIBIT A-21

Survey Results: Fiscal Accountability, Compliance, and Oversight – Operating and Capital Budgets



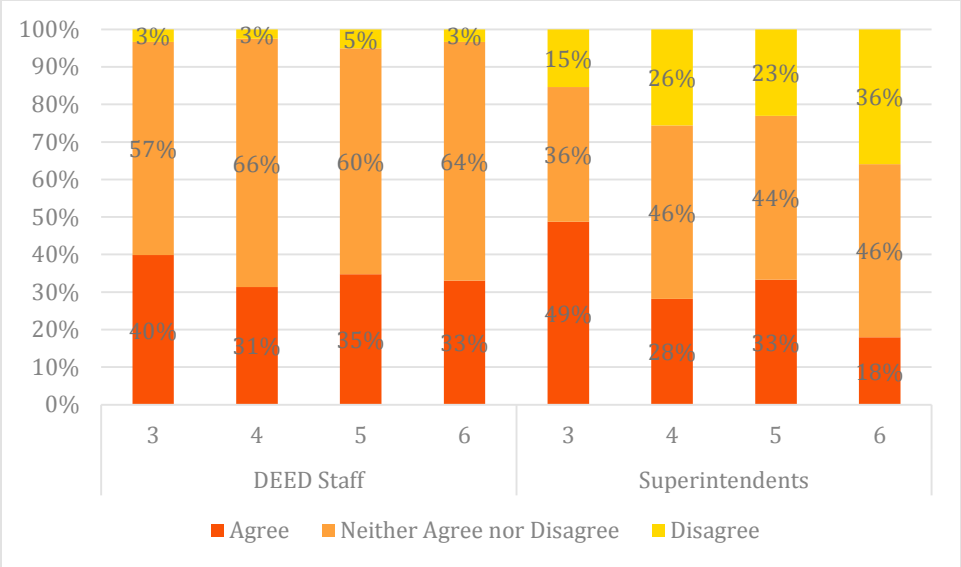
Statement text:

1. **DEED's oversight of operating and capital budgets and programs helps ensure quality standards-based instruction.**

2. **DEED's oversight of operating and capital budgets and programs helps improve academic achievement for all students.**

DEED staff more strongly agreed that its oversight of operating and capital budget programs benefits instruction and student achievement (42 and 37 percent agreement rates and six and five percent disagreement rates) compared to superintendents (28 percent agreement rates and 18 percent disagreement rates). There were few comments in this area.

EXHIBIT A-22
Survey Results: Fiscal Accountability, Compliance, and Oversight – Capital Projects Process



Statement text:

3. **DEED's decision-making process for developing capital projects, and the information to support those decisions, is publicly available.**

4. **DEED's budgetary process for developing capital projects achieves its intended goals and fulfills its responsibilities**

5. **DEED's budgetary process for developing capital projects works in a timely, cost-effective manner.**

6. **DEED's budgetary process for developing capital projects treats all districts fairly.**

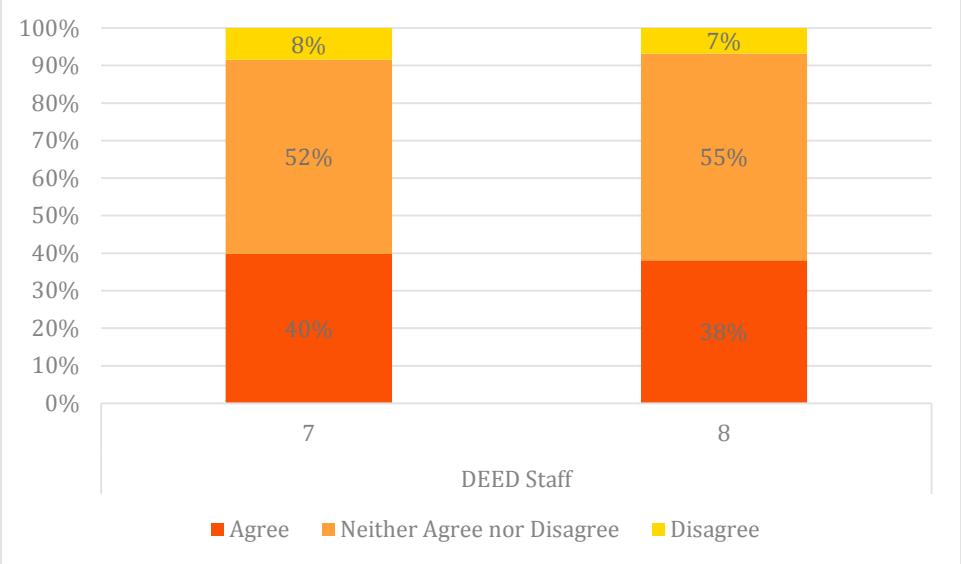
For the first three statements, both DEED staff and superintendents largely agreed: DEED staff agreement rates were 40, 31, and 35 percent, whereas superintendent agreement rates were 49, 28, and 33 percent. However, for these statements, there was divergence on disagreement rates: DEED staff

disagreement rates were three, three, and five percent, whereas superintendent disagreement rates were 15, 26, and 23 percent.

The statement with the greatest divergence was related to whether DEED's budgetary process for developing capital projects treats all districts fairly. DEED staff largely agreed (33 percent) and few disagreed (three percent). However, superintendents largely disagreed (36 percent) and few agreed (18 percent). In the comments, superintendents stated that the capital projects process is costly and cumbersome, making it difficult for smaller, less well-financed districts to assemble competitive projects.

EXHIBIT A-23
Survey Results: Fiscal Accountability, Compliance, and Oversight – Fees & Inspections

Note: Superintendents were not asked to respond to these statements.



Statement text:

7. **DEED uses its authority to collect fees, conduct inspections, enforce state law, or impose penalties to achieve its intended goals and fulfill its responsibilities.**

8. **DEED uses its authority to collect fees, conduct inspections, enforce state law, or impose penalties to do its work in a timely, cost-effective manner**.

Generally, respondents agreed that DEED uses its authority to collect fees, conduct inspections, enforce state law, or impose penalties to achieve its intended goals and fulfill its responsibilities; and does so in a timely and cost efficient manner: agreement rates were 40 and 38 percent, respectively, whereas disagreement rates were eight percent and seven percent, respectively. There were few comments on this section. However, two respondents interpreted DEED's culture in this area very differently. These comments are paraphrased below.

- DEED works hard to provide districts with every opportunity to comply with the law. Our culture of technical assistance and school district support is progressive and non-authoritarian.

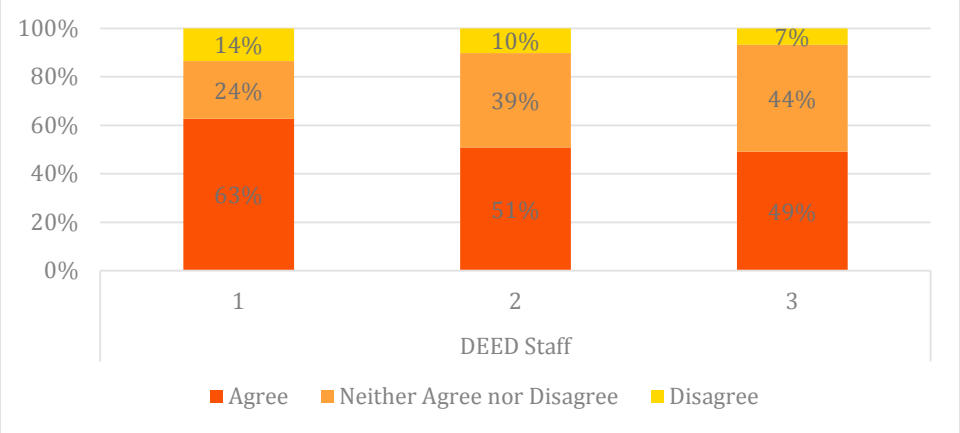
- There is no evidence of inspections, enforcement of state law, or use of penalties. There is an atmosphere of "getting around the rules" and no accountability. Breaking the rules is rewarded.

Statutorily-Defined Responsibilities

The Alaska State Legislature has assigned numerous responsibilities for DEED in statute. DEED staff were asked to respond to statements as to whether they and other staff are aware of those responsibilities, and to whether DEED effectively performs those responsibilities.

EXHIBIT A-24
Survey Results: Statutorily-Defined Responsibilities

Note: Superintendents were not asked to respond to these statements.



Statement text:

1. **I am aware of DEED's statutorily defined responsibilities.**

2. **Other DEED staff are aware of DEED's statutorily-defined responsibilities.**

3. **DEED effectively performs all of its statutorily defined responsibilities.**

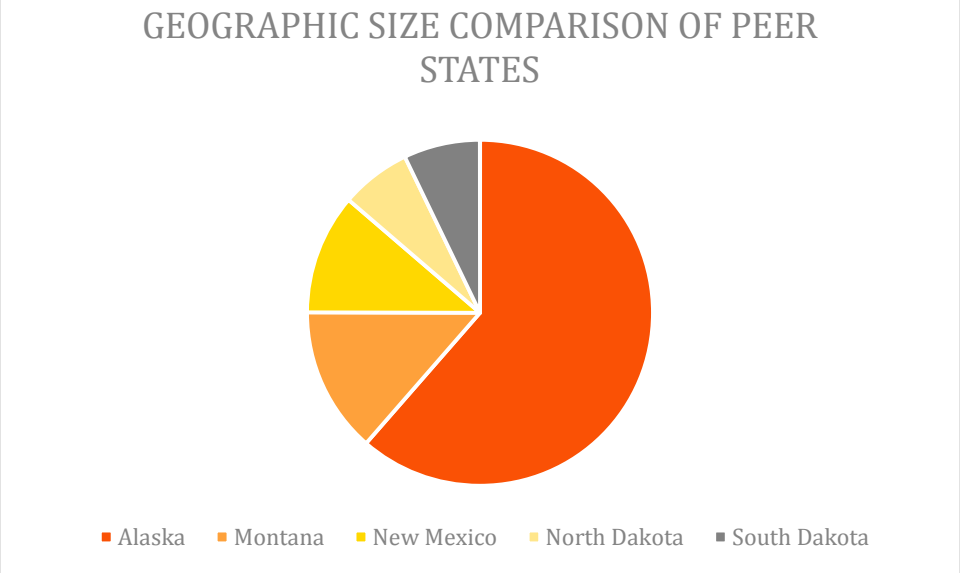
Generally, respondents agreed that they and other DEED staff are aware of the department's statutory responsibilities, and that DEED effectively performs those responsibilities: agreement rates were 51 and 49 percent. Several respondents noted that they are aware of the statutorily defined responsibilities of their program or section but not of the larger department. Several respondents also said that they, their supervisors, and/or their staff take these responsibilities very seriously. Other comments included that DEED effectively performs its statutorily-defined responsibilities when those responsibilities are funded, but that there are statutory requirements that have not been funded and therefore DEED is not able to fulfill them; and that while some staff members are very aware of their responsibilities and take them seriously, others ignore responsibilities that they do not think are valid.

This page intentionally left blank.

APPENDIX B: PEER STATE ANALYSIS

The following information provides data that can be used to benchmark Alaska with four peer states and in some instances, the national average. The peer states were determined in consultation with DEED based on comparative size, composition, and budget.

It should be noted that Public Works did not base any recommendations solely on the comparison analysis. The team recognizes that Alaska has geographical, cultural diversity and indigenous populations not prevalent in many states. To provide context to Alaska's unique geography and size, the following pie chart provides a visual depiction of Alaska's comparative size to each peer state.



Source: Alaska.org. http://www.alaska.org/how-big-is-alaska/montana

As the chart illustrates, Alaska is four times larger than the next largest state, Montana, and approximately nine times bigger than South Dakota, the smallest comparative state.

Holding for size and geography, the following data and comparisons are helpful in understanding trends in similar-sized organizations.

This information is a tool to observe differences between each state's revenues, resource allocations, enrollments, demographics, staffing, and student achievement rates. However, it is important to note that while this information can provide a solid platform for comparison, the differences in functions, structure, and need can produce imperfect appraisals. Additionally, while Public Works made every attempt to verify data, data was often self-reported and, therefore, subjective. In some cases, the most recent comparative data found was dated 2013. Nonetheless, the data provides useful trend analysis.

Sources for the comparison analysis include the National Education Association (NEA), Southern Education Foundation, National Center for Education Statistics, and Ballotpedia.

The comparison states are:

- Montana
- New Mexico
- North Dakota
- South Dakota

Overview of Key Peer State Observations

Peer state data and comparisons found in this Appendix provide a useful tool to observe differences in state's resources and outcomes. The data illustrates some interesting findings, including:

- While Alaska has higher than average total revenue, per pupil spending, and higher teacher salaries, it also has lower test scores and graduation rates than its peer states. More specifically, Montana outperforms all of the peer states in National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) test scores, Annual Yearly Progress (AYP), and graduation rates, while spending only slightly more or less than the national average per pupil and significantly less than Alaska, which has much poorer performance rates. Based on interviews, there is a perception that there is a correlation between Alaska's unique geography and lack of infrastructure that also contributes to the disparity between Alaska's spending on education relative to its peer states and performance outcomes.

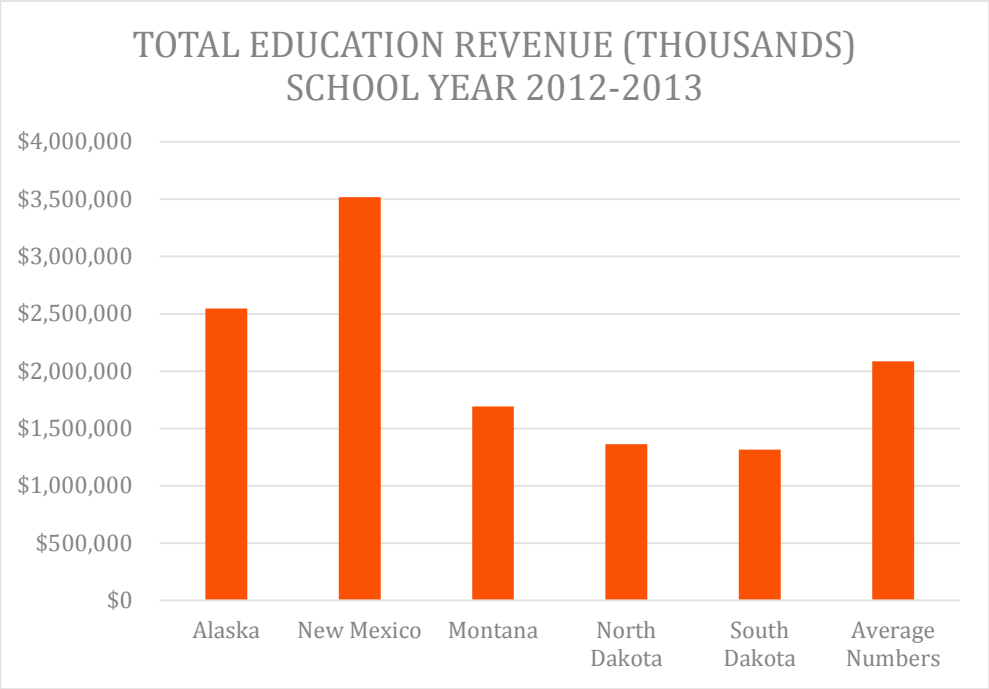
- Alaska has a much lower than average participation rate in the National School Lunch Program but is on par with its peer states in terms of percentage of students considered “low income.”

- Almost two-thirds of Alaska’s schools are located in rural areas. These schools serve high percentages of English Language Learner students (one in five); minority students (almost three in five); and families who have changed residence in the previous 12 months. While acknowledging Alaska’s unique terrain and size, the numbers demonstrate that Alaska serves a lower percentage of rural students than its peer states. Rural service area represents 32.4 percent of Alaska’s students compared to an average rate of 34.4 percent. South Dakota serves the greatest number of rural students at 41.4 percent.

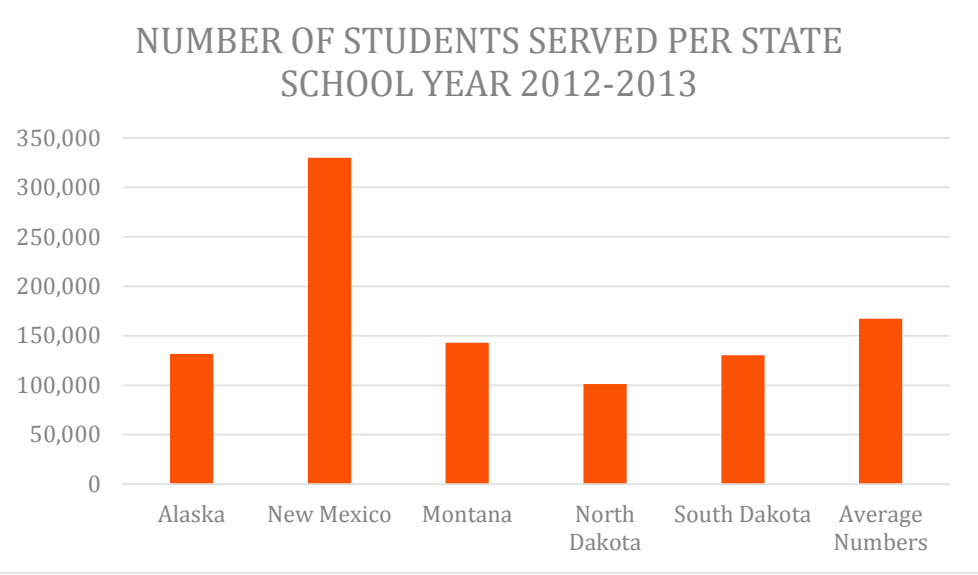
- Comparison also demonstrates that relative to number of students served, Alaska’s Department of Education is on par with its peer states for number of staff.

Overview and Revenue

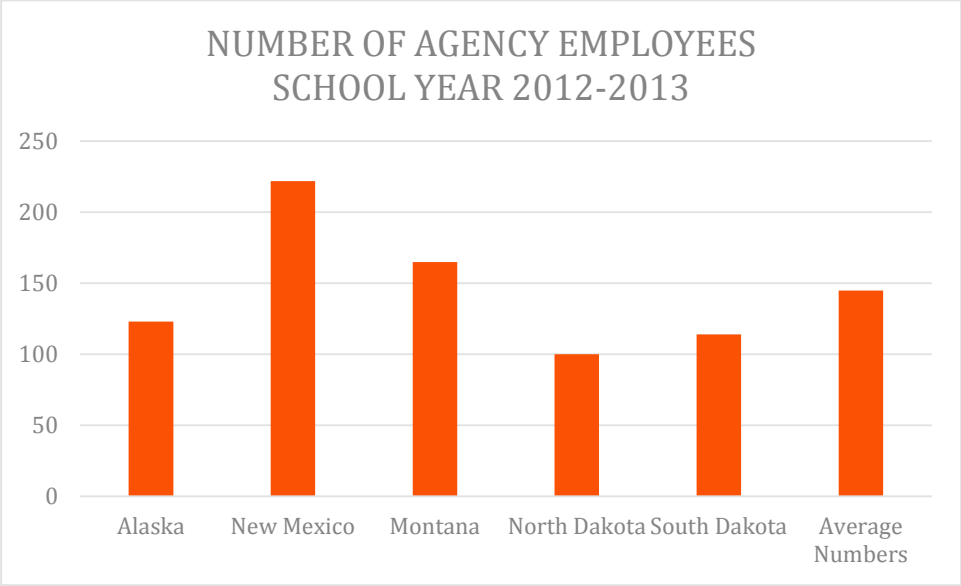
To provide a general comparative overview, the following graphs provide a snapshot of state data for Alaska, New Mexico, Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota. The data presented in the graphs below include total revenue, number of students served, number of agency employees, average dollars spent per pupil, average teacher salary, and percentage of funding on instruction. The final column in each chart provides an average of the data. This information will serve as the basis for further analysis.



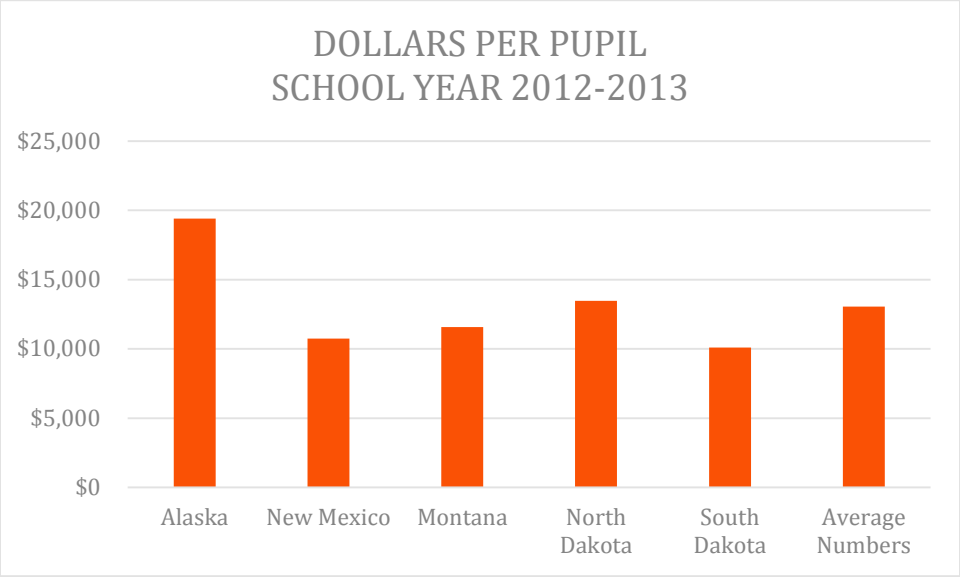
Source: Ballotpedia, 2013 data. Governing.com, 2013 data, to cross reference numbers.



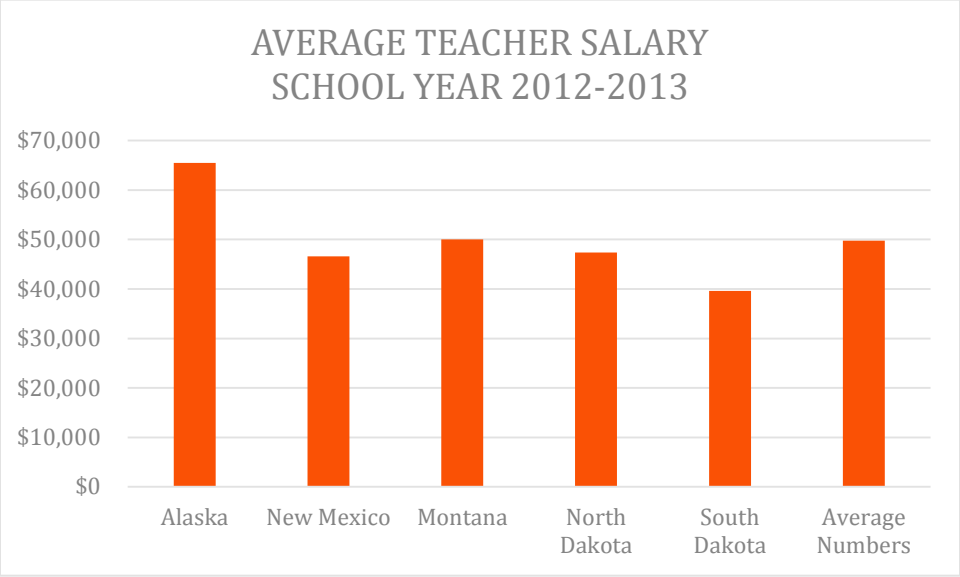
Source: Ballotpedia, 2013 data. Governing.com, 2013 data, to cross reference numbers.



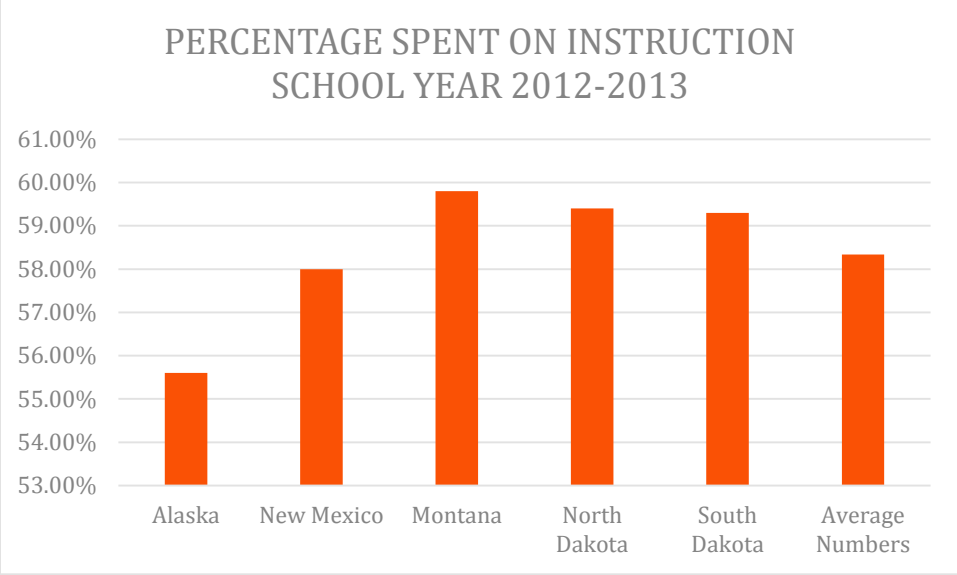
Source: Staff numbers are from state information online and phone calls.



Source: Ballotpedia, 2013 data. Governing.com, 2013 data, to cross reference numbers.



Source: Ballotpedia, 2013 data. Governing.com, 2013 data, to cross reference numbers.



Source: Ballotpedia, 2013 data. Governing.com, 2013 data, to cross reference numbers.

The data above illustrate that:

- Alaska has higher than average total revenue;

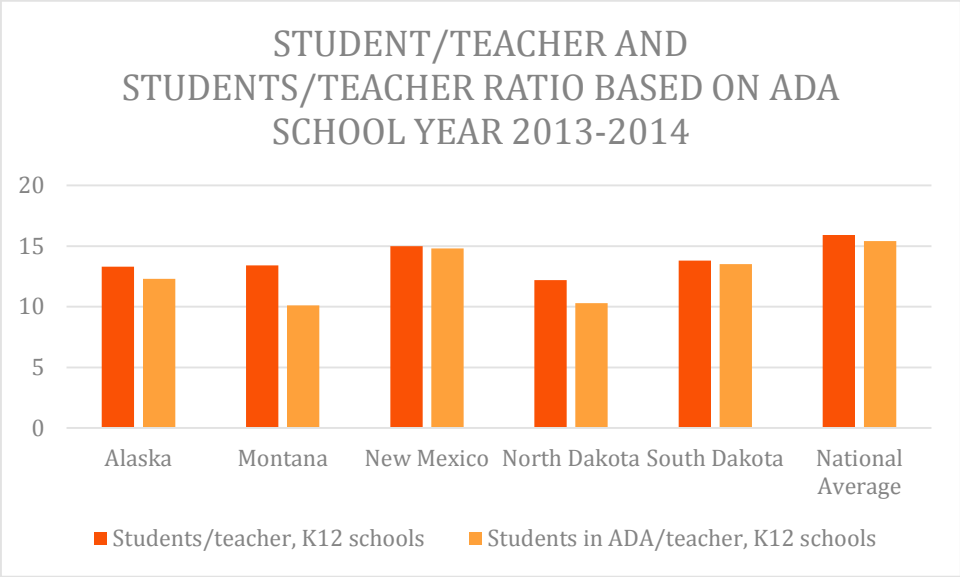
- Alaska spends more than average per pupil;
- Alaska pays teachers higher than average salaries;
- Alaska serves fewer students on average than its peer states; and
- Alaska has fewer agency staff than the average of its peer states.

The table also illustrates that Montana spends less per pupil than the national average, which was $10,700 during fiscal year 2013[121], while Alaska spends much more than the national average. In terms of percent spent on instruction, all of the comparison states spend slightly less than the national average, which is 60, although Alaska spends the least and Montana spends the most.

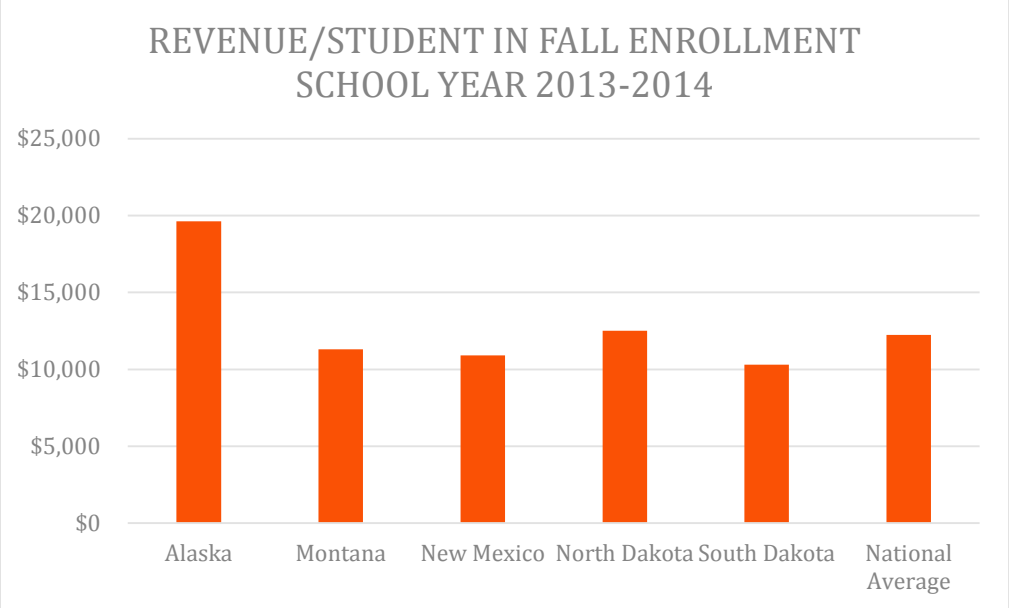
Resource Allocation

Another relevant comparison is resource allocation, which indicates the amount of funding or instructional resources provided for education. There are various measures of resource allocation, including per pupil funding, per capital spending on education, and percent of education funding used for instruction. The data below on student/teacher ratios, revenue/student, funding sources, and per capita spending on education was compiled with data from the National Education Association. The graph below includes the information listed above for Alaska and each of the peer states as well as the national average. The Average Daily Attendance (ADA) counts are based on the numbers of children actually in attendance in a school or district each day, then, typically averaged on a bimonthly or quarterly basis in order to determine mid-year adjustments to state aid.[122]

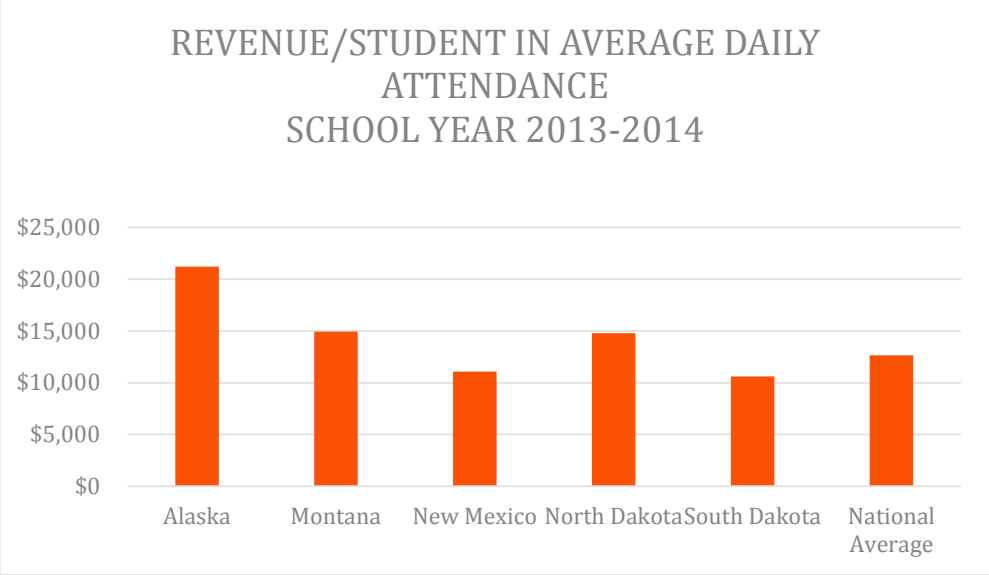
[121] https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2015/cb15-98.html
[122] School Finance 101. https://schoolfinance101.wordpress.com/2012/02/25/student-enrollments-state-school-finance-policies/



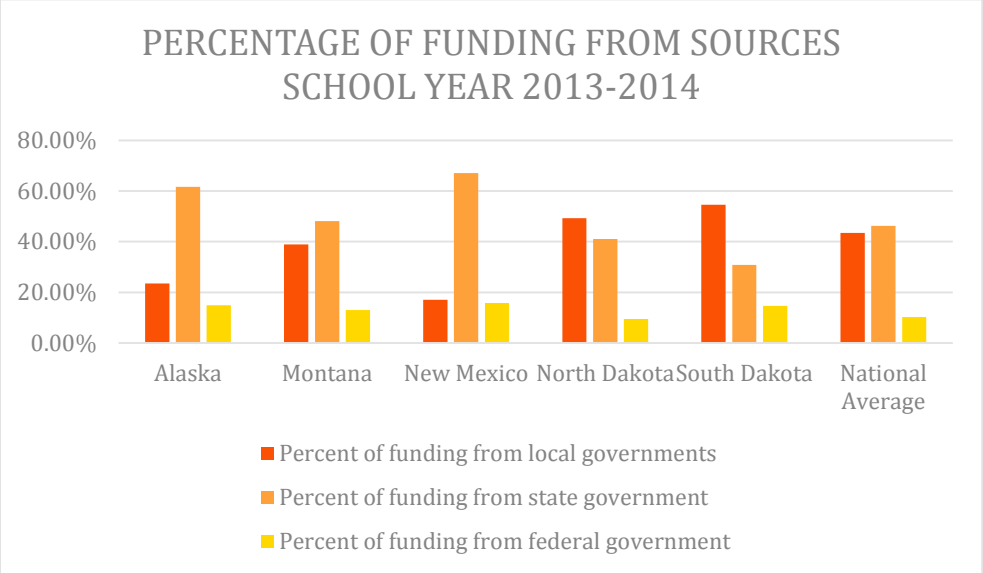
Source: National Education Association, 2013-2014.



Source: National Education Association, 2013-2014.



Source: National Education Association, 2013-2014.



Source: National Education Association, 2013-2014.

The charts above provides some noteworthy findings:

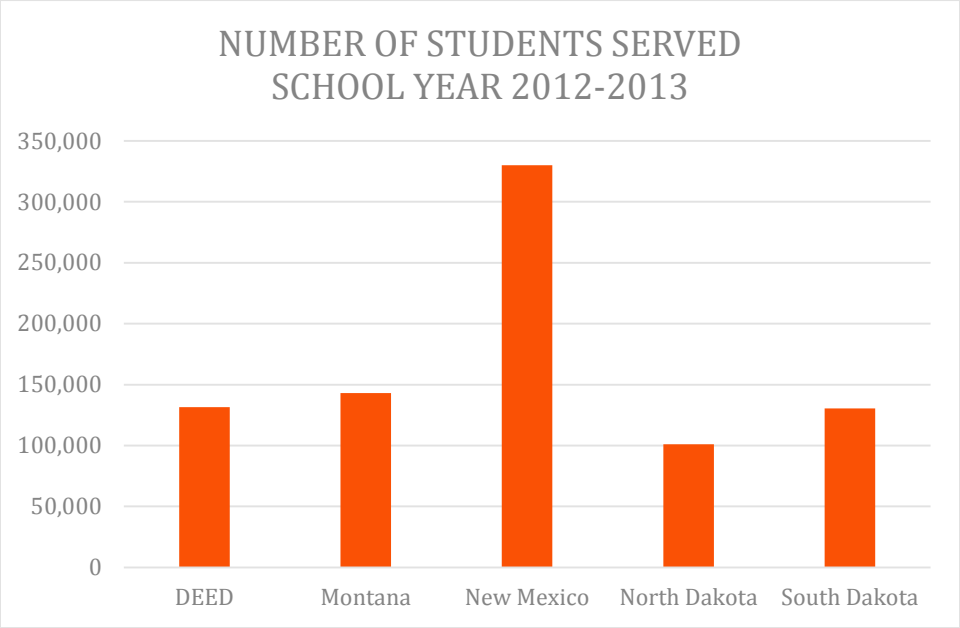
- All of the states have student to teacher ratios at less than the national average, perhaps due to the prevalence of rural populations.

- As will be seen in Section 4.0 of this Appendix, Montana outperforms all of the peer states in NAEP test scores, AYP, and graduation rates, while spending only slightly less than the national average per pupil, and spends significantly less than Alaska, which has much poorer performance rates.

- While federal funding as a portion of total education funding mix is in the same range for all of these states, the state and local portions of funding vary greatly.

Enrollment and Demographics

The following graph provides a breakdown of approximate K-12 enrollment statewide for school year 2012-2013.

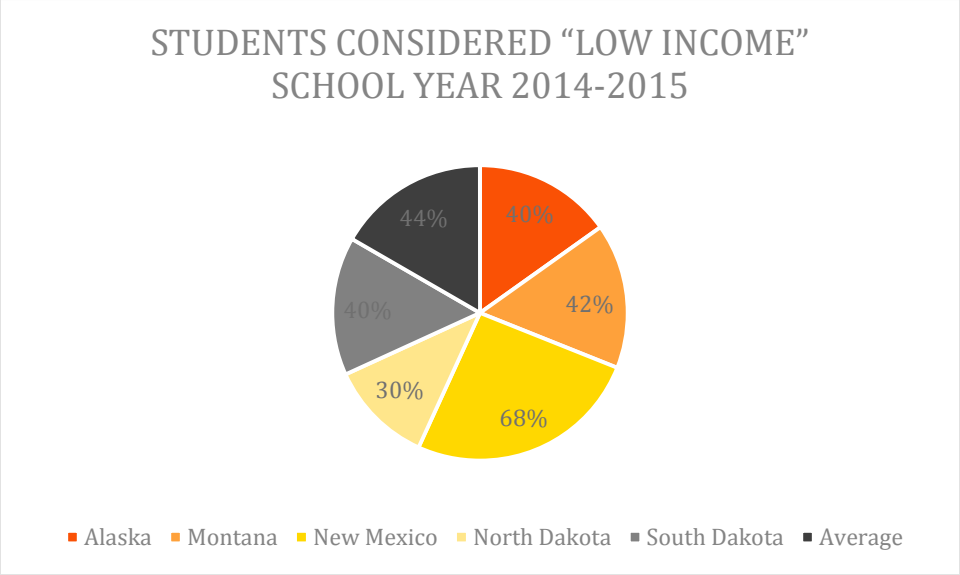


Source: Ballotpedia.com, 2012-13.

As illustrated above, Alaska serves roughly the same number of students as South Dakota, serves more than North Dakota, and less than Montana and New Mexico. These numbers are highlighted again in order to provide content for the next section, which includes comparisons of student ethnicity, regional school attendance, and national lunch participation.

Socio-Economic Numbers

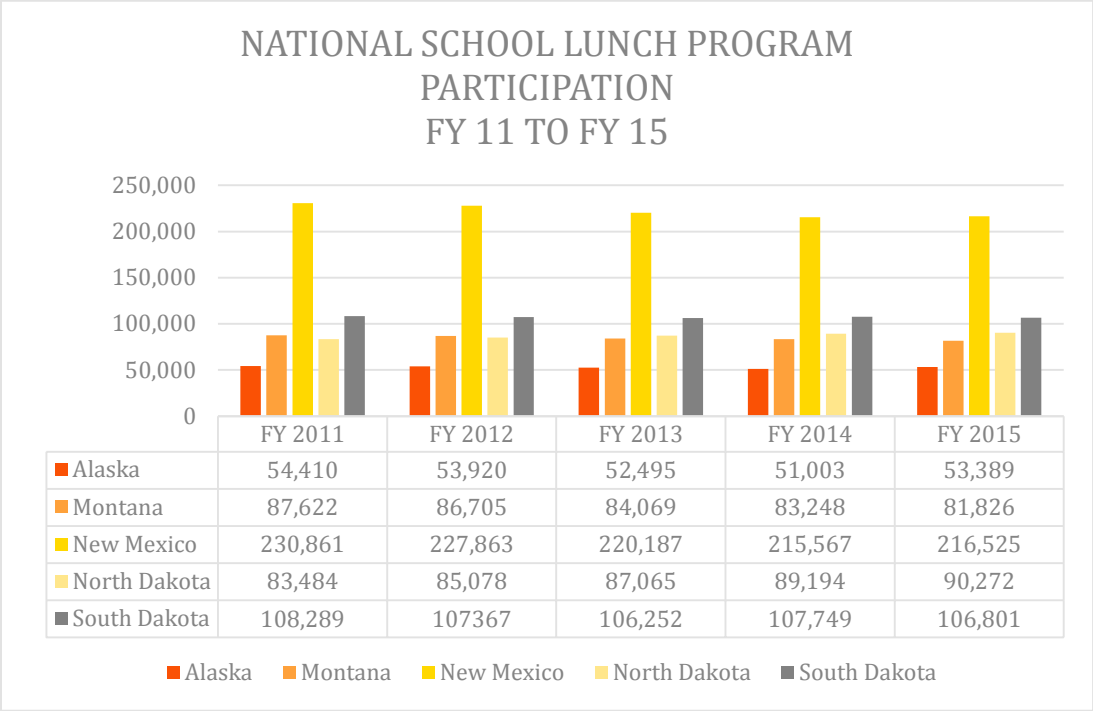
A significant comparison for benchmarking is to look at the number of "low income" students and the number of students participating in the National School Lunch Program. The chart below presents information from a new study by the Southern Education Foundation that shows the percentage of students considered "low income" in Alaska and each of the peer states.



Source: Southern Education Foundation website, 2015.

The graph illustrates that Alaska has the same percentage of low income students as South Dakota, slightly less than Montana, significantly less than New Mexico, and more than North Dakota. The overall average percentage is 44 percent, which puts Alaska as below average when compared to its peer states.

To expand this evaluation, the graph below provides the number of students in each state participating in the National School Lunch Program over five years (FY 2011 – FY 2015).



	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Alaska	54,410	53,920	52,495	51,003	53,389
Montana	87,622	86,705	84,069	83,248	81,826
New Mexico	230,861	227,863	220,187	215,567	216,525
North Dakota	83,484	85,078	87,065	89,194	90,272
South Dakota	108,289	107367	106,252	107,749	106,801

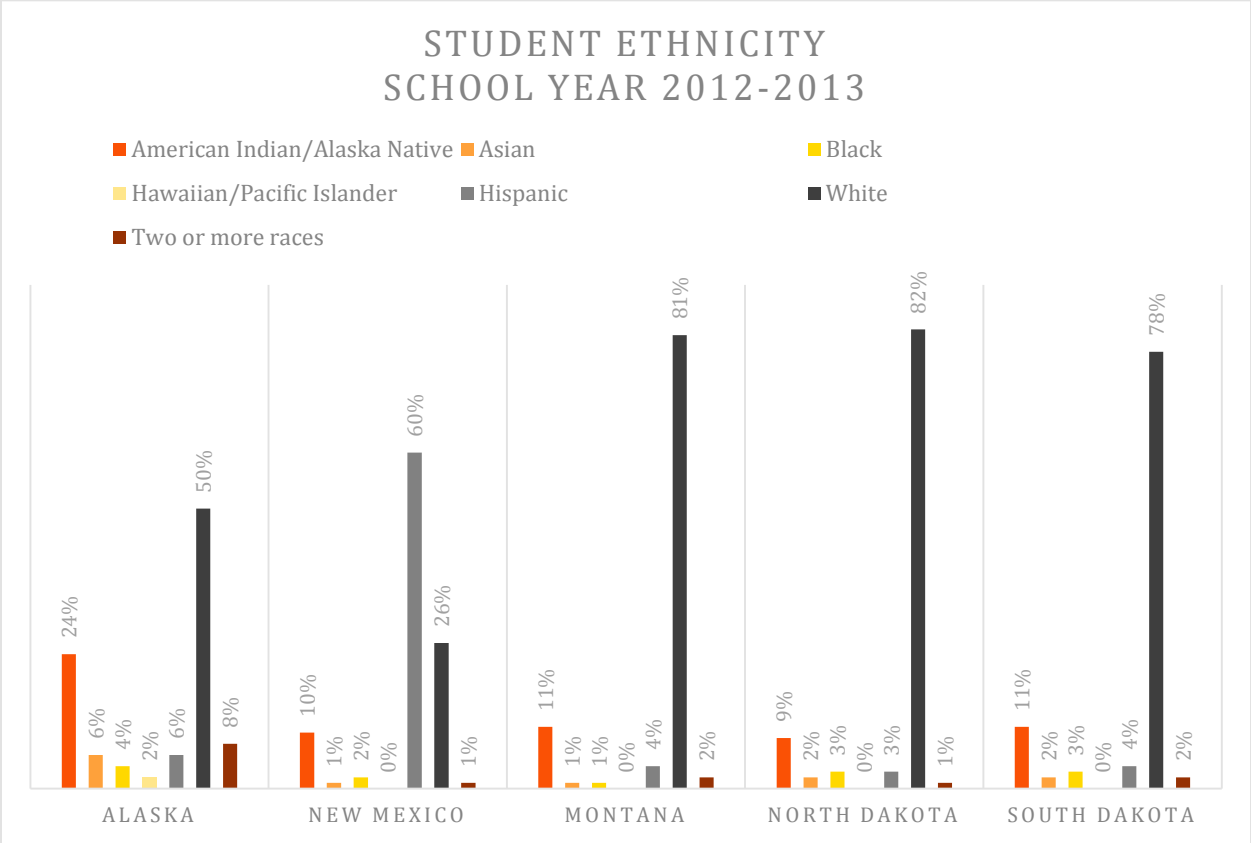
Source: US Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Services website, 2015.

When factored as a percentage of the 2013 enrollment, the numbers above demonstrate the following approximate participation rates for each state. Of all the peer states, Alaska has the lowest National School Lunch Program participation rate.

- 40.0 percent of Alaska's students;
- 66.7 of New Mexico students;
- 58.8 percent of Montana's students;
- 86.0 percent of North Dakota's students; and
- 81.0 percent of South Dakota's students

Demographics

To further compare the student populations of each state, the graph below displays the ethnic makeup of K-12 enrollment in Alaska and the selected peer states for the 2012-13 school year.



Source: Ballotpedia.org, 2012-13.

The above shows that in Alaska, Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota the majority of students are white, while in New Mexico, the majority of students are Hispanic (59.9 percent). It also illustrates that Alaska has the highest percentage of American Indians/Alaska Natives, about 23.5 percent of the student population. Alaska has a higher non-white population (49.9 percent) than Montana (19.5 percent), North Dakota (17.9 percent, and South Dakota (22.4

percent).

In addition to ethnic makeup, it is also interesting to examine the geographic breakdown of student population. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, about 30 percent of all public school students in the country attended city schools during the 2012-13 school year, about 40 percent attended suburban schools, approximately 11.5 percent of all students attended schools in towns, and about 18.7 percent attended rural schools. The graphs on the next page provide information from Ballotpedia.com 2013, and illustrate the percentage breakdown for school attendance in those areas for Alaska, the peer states, and national average.

ALASKA
DISTRIBUTION BY AREA
SCHOOL YEAR 2012-2013

CITY SUBURBAN TOWN RURAL

MONTANA
DISTRIBUTION BY AREA
SCHOOL YEAR 2012-2013

CITY SUBURBAN TOWN RURAL

NORTH DAKOTA
DISTRIBUTION BY AREA
SCHOOL YEAR 2012-2013

CITY SUBURBAN TOWN RURAL

SOUTH DAKOTA
DISTRIBUTION BY AREA
SCHOOL YEAR 2012-2013

CITY SUBURBAN TOWN RURAL

NEW MEXICO
DISTRIBUTION BY AREA
SCHOOL YEAR 2012-2013

CITY SUBURBAN TOWN RURAL

NATIONAL AVERAGE
DISTRIBUTION BY AREA
SCHOOL YEAR 2012-2013

CITY SUBURBAN TOWN RURAL

The distribution by area charts above reveal that similar to the national average, where approximately 37 percent of students attend school in a city or suburban area, approximately 42 percent of Alaska's students attend city or suburban schools. Similar to the average and the peers, approximately 58 percent of Alaska students attend rural or town schools. More students attended school in towns or rural schools than in city or suburban schools. In South Dakota, only 28.9 percent of the students attended city or suburban schools compared to approximately 71.1 percent who attended rural or town schools.

Staffing

The following information provides an overview of DEED's staffing and primary responsibilities relative to peer state organizations. The purpose of this analysis is to determine average numbers of employees in each state and assess if DEED is comparably staffed to similar departments. It is important to note that each state has its own set of unique characteristics determining staff size and we recognize that Alaska has geographical and other unique challenges that may affect staffing decisions. However, many DEED and district interviews as well as survey results indicate that DEED is understaffed and thus, Public Works conducted this analysis to learn how other states of similar size compare to Alaska. Our team is not basing any staffing recommendations solely on this analysis, but rather provide it as a point of comparison.

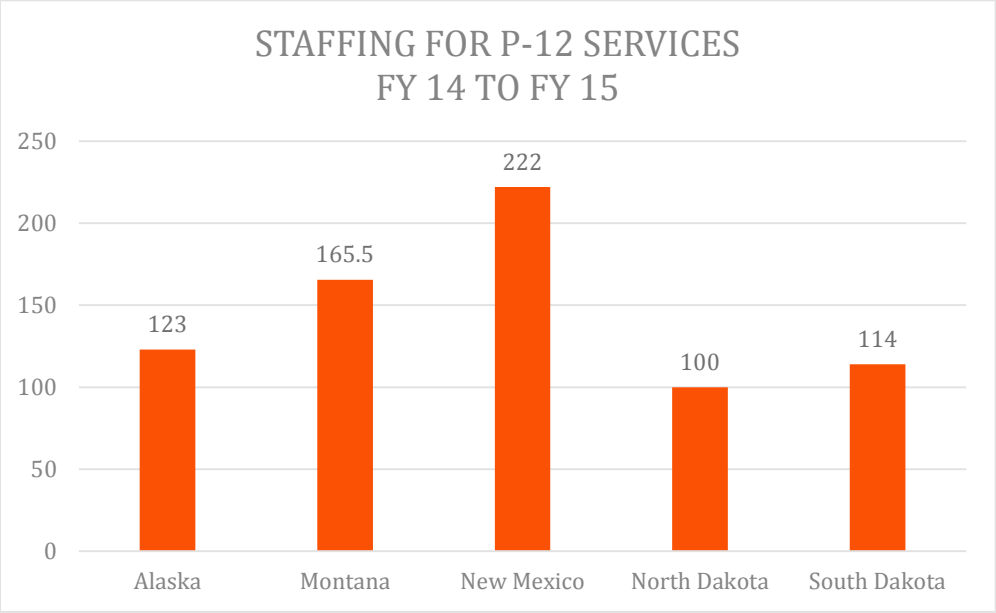
As previously noted, each state has its own unique structure and characteristics so direct staffing comparisons can be misleading even though the agencies provide similar services to local school districts. Therefore, in examining the total numbers of employees at each agency, we have grouped staff into five categories and have focused on direct P12 services. The following are the five broad categories:

- State Board of Education;
- P12 Educational Services;
- Council on the Arts;
- State Library Operations; and
- Archives.

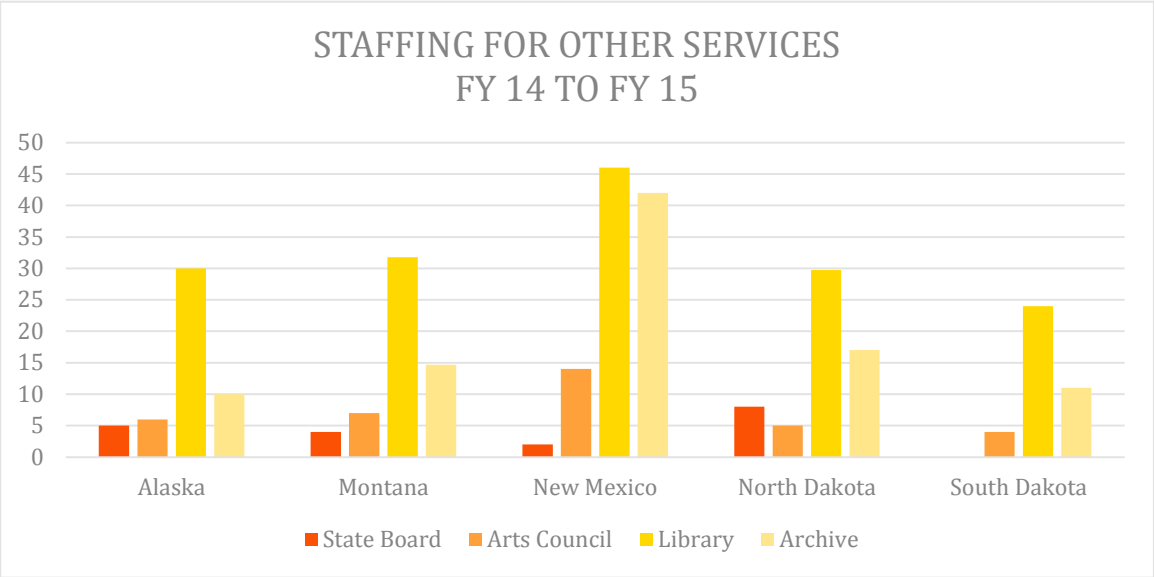
For the purposes of this analysis, we are using numbers and functions tied to core P12 services and have mostly excluded Council on the Arts, State Library Operations, and Archives. Staffing in other functional areas (which at DEED

includes post-secondary education, museums, and Mt. Edgecumbe High School) was not included since post-secondary education is outside the scope of our review and the museum and state-school functions were considered too state-specific to be comparable.

The graph below provides an overview of information on staffing for each of these five categories.



Sources: Alaska Organizational Chart, DEED. Montana State Budget 2015. New Mexico State Budget 2013. New Mexico Arts Council website, 2015. New Mexico State Library website. 2015. New Mexico Commission for Public Records website, 2015. North Dakota Education and Standards Board website, 2015. North Dakota State Historical website, 2015. South Dakota Online Directory 2015. South Dakota Historical Society website, 2015. South Dakota Arts Council website, 2015.



Sources: Alaska Organizational Chart, DEED. Montana State Budget 2015. New Mexico State Budget 2013. New Mexico Arts Council website, 2015. New Mexico State Library website. 2015. New Mexico Commission for Public Records website, 2015. North Dakota Education and Standards Board website, 2015. North Dakota State Historical website, 2015. South Dakota Online Directory 2015. South Dakota Historical Society website, 2015. South Dakota Arts Council website, 2015.

The graph illustrates that Alaska is on par with South Dakota, with roughly the same enrollment. Alaska has more employees than North Dakota, but also serves approximately 30,000 more students. Alaska has fewer employees than Montana, which serves approximately 12,000 more students, and significantly fewer staff than New Mexico, which serves over 100,000 more students.

The graph also shows that Alaska is on par with staffing levels for library services, arts council staff and archives.

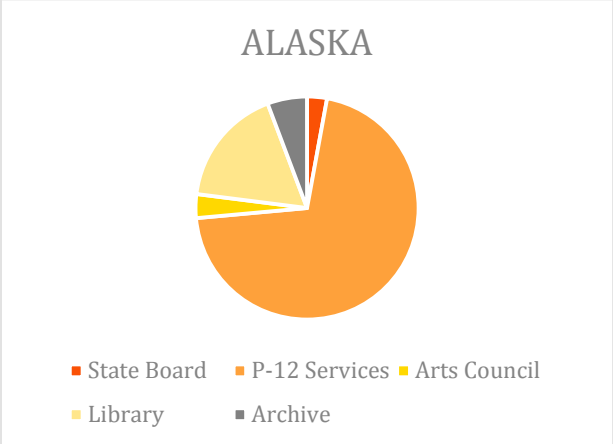
In addition to the overall numbers illustrated above, we have tried to provide numbers of staff for specific program and services, although because each state agency is structured differently and provides varying services, a direct comparison is not possible. We were, however, able to provide a more general overview based on broader areas of responsibility. For the purposes of this analysis, P12 Education Services includes:

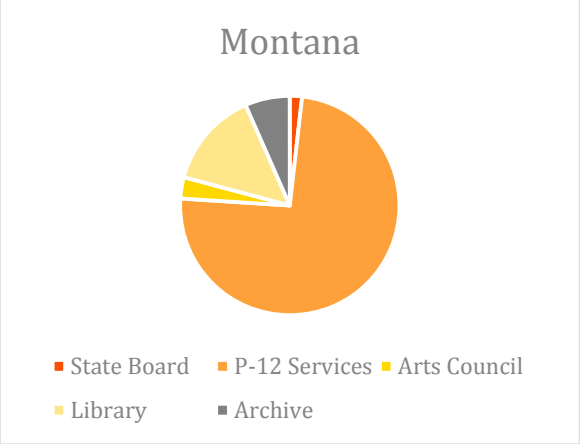
- Administrative Services
- School Finance
- Student & School Achievement
- Teacher Certification and Development
- Early Learning Coordination
- Child Nutrition
- Professional Teaching Practices
- Information Services
- State System of Support

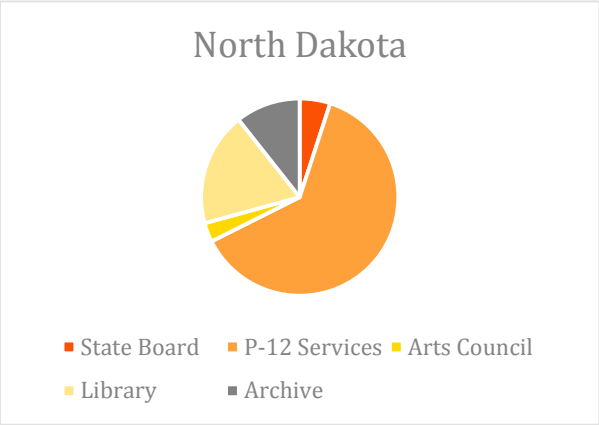
Because of assumptions made about what comprised the various functional units in each department of education, the peer states' P12 Services staffing may or may not include all of the same functions conducted by the DEED programs listed above. Public Works called the various state departments to gather the most current staffing levels, but was unable to reach a contact in Montana or New Mexico; consequently, the numbers below are from their online staff directories. Again, because agencies are structured differently, we have combined numbers to the best of available resources within similar functional areas.

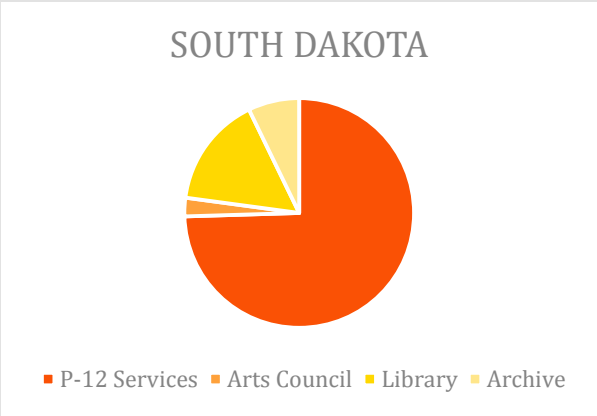
The graphs below provide approximate staffing numbers in the service categories listed above.

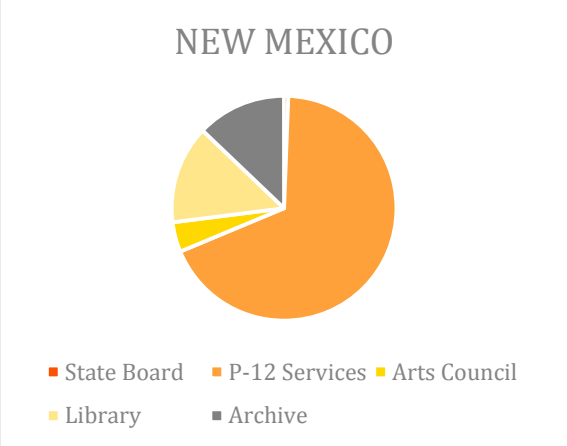
P-12 SERVICE AREA STAFFING
FY14 to FY 15











Sources: Alaska Organizational Chart, 2015. NMPED staff locator document, 2013. HR Director for North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, 2015. South Dakota online staff directory, 2015. Montana online directory, 2015.

This charts above reveals that Alaska is on par with its peer states in terms of staffing per designated functional area. In fact, relative to its enrollment, Alaska provides a higher than average number of staff in the area of Student & School Achievement.

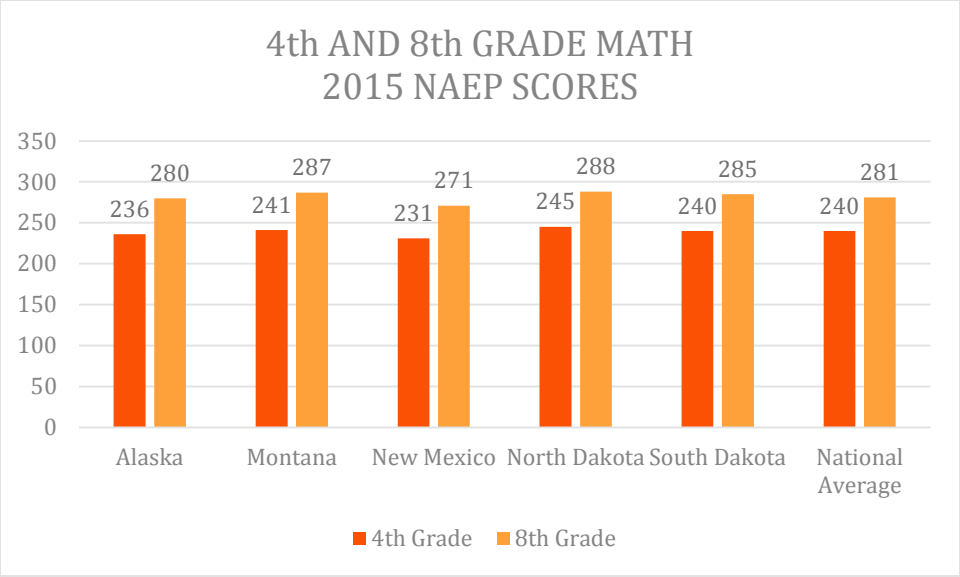
Student Achievement

Data was gathered to compare Alaska and peer states on an assortment of academic and funding performance measures, including standardized tests,

high school graduation rates, adequate yearly progress, and resource allocation.

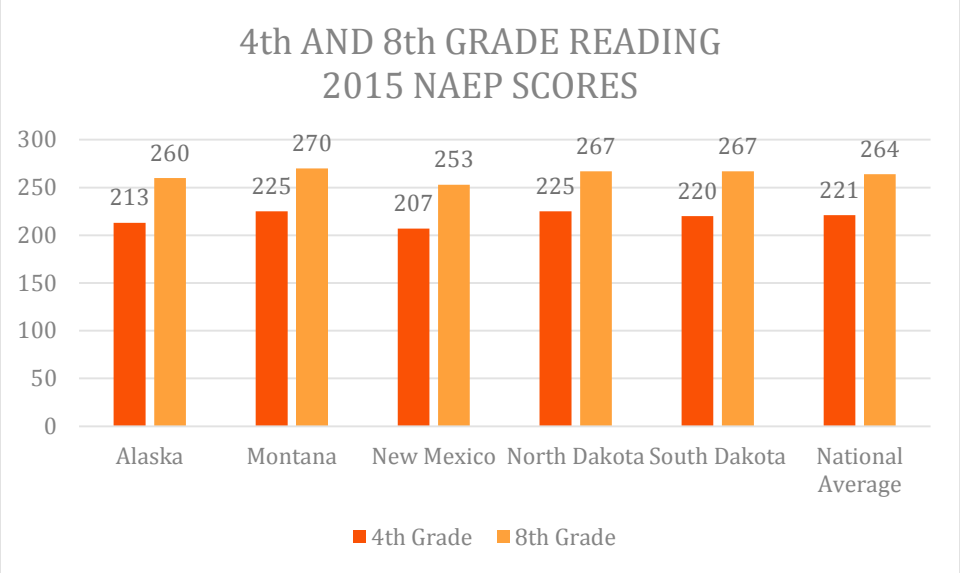
Standardized Tests

Collected data was based on results of the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) (2013) and on ACT Test Scores (2015). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the NAEP is "the largest nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America's students know and can do in various subject areas."[123] Assessments are conducted uniformly across the nation and do not vary significantly from year to year in order to allow for tracking of change over time. Tested subject areas include mathematics, reading, science, writing, the arts, civics, economics, geography, U.S. history, and technology and engineering literacy. The two graphs below present the average scores for the 2015 NAEP 4th and 8th grade mathematics and reading assessments for Alaska and the selected peer states, as well as the national average.



Source: NAEP 2015 Data. https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/states/

[123] http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about/

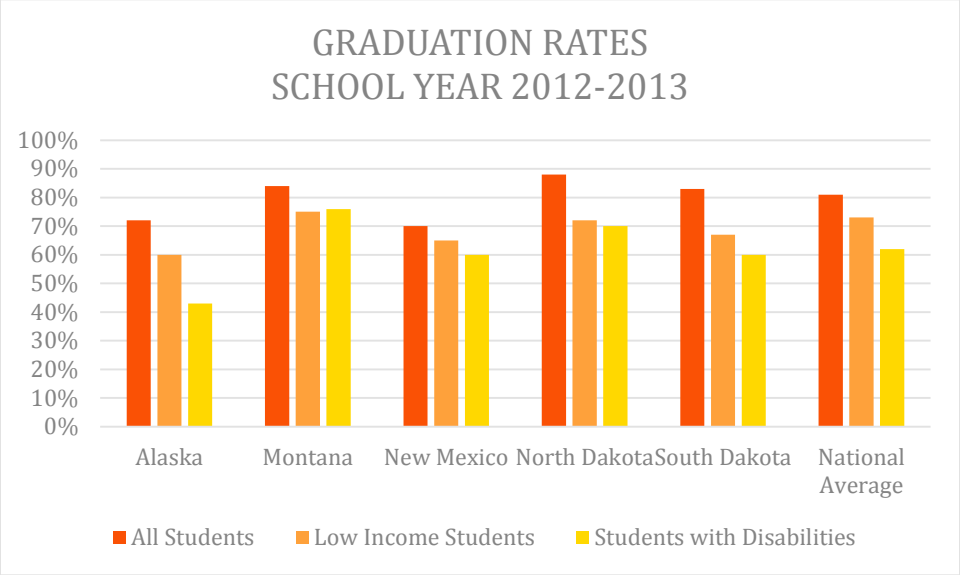


Source: NAEP 2015 Data. https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/states/

Alaska and New Mexico both scored below the national average on all four tests. Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota scored at or above the national average on all four tests.

High School Graduation Rates

High school graduation rates are another measure of comparison between states. However, it is important to note that they are considered an imperfect comparison because of differences in graduation requirements. The graph below provides high school graduation rates for Alaska and the peer states, and the national average.



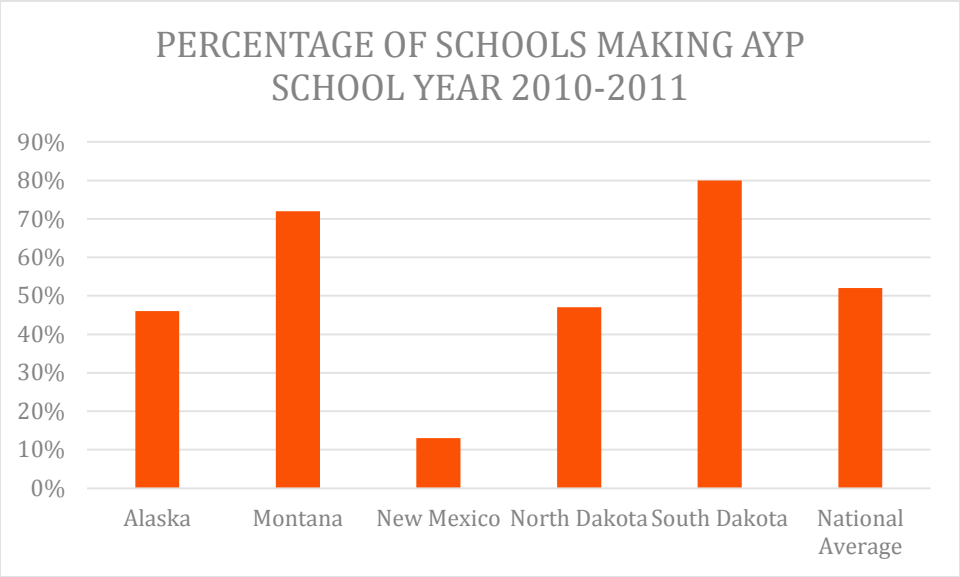
Source: Edweek.org. 2015.

With the exception of slightly lower overall graduation rates in New Mexico, Alaska had the lowest graduation rates across the board. The Alaska graduation rates for low income students and students with disabilities were significantly lower than those in peer states. Montana had the highest graduation among all comparison states for all three groups of students. North and South Dakota had strong overall graduation rates, but rates for low-income students and students with disabilities were below the national average. These trends are very similar to the trends seen in the NAEP test results, shown above.

Adequate Yearly Progress

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is a measurement created by the United States No Child Left Behind Act. It is used to assess every public school and school district in the country based on the results of standardized tests. All kindergarten through 12th grade students are expected to demonstrate AYP in reading/language arts and mathematics. High schools and districts must also demonstrate AYP in graduation rates and at least one other academic indicator. States develop their own criteria for meeting AYP that must be submitted to the US Department of Education for approval. Since the criteria vary by state, AYP is an imperfect comparison, but provides interesting information nonetheless. The

graph below provides the AYP rates for Alaska and the peer states, as well as the national average.



Source: Governing Magazine reporting data compile by Center on Education Policy, 2010- 2011.

The chart above shows that Alaska, along with New Mexico and North Dakota, performs below the national average on AYP, with New Mexico demonstrating particularly low AYP rates. In contrast, Montana and South Dakota have very high AYP rates.

APPENDIX C: ACRONYM DEFINITIONS

AAESP	Alaska Association of Elementary School Principals
AARC	Alaska Autism Resource Center
AASSP	Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals
ACPE	Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education
ACSA	Alaska Council of School Administrators
ACT	American College Test
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ADA	Average Daily Attendance
AELAS	Arizona's Education Learning and Accountability System
AEYC	Alaska Early Years' Conference
AK NABEC	Alaska Native American Business Enterprise Center
AK STEPP	Alaska Steps Toward Educational Progress and Partnerships
ALASBO	Alaska School Business Officials Conference
AMEREF	Alaska Mineral and Energy Resource Education Fund
AMEREF (formerly)	Alaska Resource Education Grant
AAP	Alaska Assessment of Progress
AMP	Alaska Measures of Progress
ANSEP	Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program
AP	Advanced Placement
APA	Administrative Procedures Act
APA	Augenblick, Palaich and Associates
APERS	Autism Program Environmental Rating Scale
APOG	Alaska Procurement Officers Group
APS	Alaska Performance Scholarships
ASA	Alaska Superintendents Association
ASCA	Alaska State Council on the Arts
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
ASDN	Alaska Staff Development Network
ASIS	Alaska Student ID System

AWIB	Alaska Workforce Investment Board
AYP	Adequate Yearly Progress
CCRA	College or Career Readiness Assessment
CCSSO	Council of Chief State School Officers
CEAAC (formerly)	Coalition for Education Equity
CEP	Community Eligibility Provision
CIO	Chief Information Officer
CIP	Capital Improvement Project
CRACG	Commissioner's Raising Achievement/Closing Gaps Council
CRPE	Center on Reinventing Public Education
CTE	Career and Technical Education
DCCED	Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development
DEED	Department of Education and Early Development
DESE	Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
DGF	Designated Funds
DHHS	Department of Health and Human Services
DLA	Division of Legislative Audit
DOA	Department of Administration
DOLWD	Departments of Labor and Workforce Development
DPS	Department of Public Safety
ECERS-R	Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised
ECS	Education Commission of the States
EIMAC	Education Information Management Advisory Consortium
ESEA	Elementary and Secondary Education Act
ESSA	Every Student Succeeds Act
ETPL	Eligible Training Provider List
FAIS	Fixed Asset Inventory System
FAQ	Frequently-Asked Questions
FCC	Federal Communications Commission
FEA	Forum on Educational Accountability

GRE	Graduate Record Exam
HB44	Alaska Safe Children's Act
HHFKA	Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act
IEP	Individual Education Program
LAM	Library, Archives, and Museum
LEA	local education agency
LBAC	Legislative Budget and Audit Committee
LEED	Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design
LMS	Learning Management Systems
LSBMAC	Local School Board Member Advisory Council
MEHS	Mt. Edgecumbe High School
MOUs	Memoranda of Understanding
MQs	Minimum Qualifications
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress
NASBE	National Association of State Boards of Education
NASDTEC	National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification
NCDPI	North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
NCLB	No Child Left Behind Act
NCSBE	North Carolina State Board of Education
NGA	National Governors' Association
NGSC	Next-Generation Student Council
NSLP	National School Lunch Program
OEIB	Oregon Education Investment Board
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
PAC	Parents Advisory Council
PAT	Parents as Teachers
PCN	Position Control Number
PM	Preventive Maintenance
PMO	project management office

PrAC	Principals Advisory Council
PTPC	Professional Teaching Practices Commission
QRIS	Quality Rating and Improvement System
RA	Registered Apprenticeships
RFP	Request For Proposals
RIMS	Records Information Management Services
ROI	Return on Investment
RtI	Response to Intervention
RSA	Rehabilitative Services Administration
SAC	Superintendents Advisory Council
SAE	State Administrative Expense (funds)
SAT	Scholastic Aptitude Test
SEAs	State Education Agencies
SERRC	Southeast Regional Resource Center
SESA	Special Education Service Agency
SETDA	State Education Technology Directors Association
SIS	Student Information System
SLA	Service Level Agreements
SMART	Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely Goals
SOS	Science On a Sphere®
SREB	Southern Regional Education Board
SSD	Sitka School District
SSID	Statewide Student Identification
SSOS	State System of Support
State Board	Alaska State Board of Education
STEPP	Steps Toward Educational Progress and Partnerships
TAC	Teachers Advisory Council
TBC	Talking Book Center
TEA	Texas Education Agency
TLS	Teaching and Learning Support
TVEP	Technical Vocation Education Program

UA	University of Alaska
UAA	University of Alaska Anchorage
UGF	Unrestricted General Fund
USAC	Universal Service Administrative Company
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USDOE	United States Department of Education
VAM	Value-Added Metrics
WWAMI	A collaborative medical school among universities in five northwestern states, Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana, and Idaho and the University of Washington School of Medicine.
WFD	Workforce Development

APPENDIX D: LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS BY TIER AND LEGISLATIVE ACTION REQUIRED

The full report provides a total of 77 recommendations. Each recommendation is labeled as a Tier 1, Tier 2, or Tier 3 recommendation. This refers to our team's suggested level of importance in the urgency of the implementation of the recommendation. The table below also indicates whether legislative action is required to implement the recommendation.

Tier 1: Greatest Impact: DEED should implement these recommendations immediately to optimize its efficiency and effectiveness.

Tier 2: Moderate Impact: DEED should implement these recommendations as soon as practical to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its operations and programs.

Tier 3: Minimal Impact: DEED should implement these recommendations when time and funds are available as best suits the needs of the department.

Below is a list of the recommendations by tier and the page number where the recommendation can be found in the report.

Tier 1 Recommendations	Legislative Action Required	Page
1.1.1 Alter the current governance structure of DEED to ensure role clarity and establish a clear reporting structure for the commissioner of education position.	Yes	30
1.2.1 Clearly define the State Board of Education's role and ensure the role is communicated to all stakeholders and allow the clearly defined role to drive Board decisions.	No	36
1.2.2 Increase the level of State Board of Education members' training and professional development.	No	37
1.2.3 Consider becoming a member of the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE).	No	38
1.2.4 Conduct annual State Board self-evaluations.	No	40

Tier 1 Recommendations	Legislative Action Required	Page
1.3.1 Ensure the new DEED strategic plan is data-driven, with specific, measureable, attainable, realistic, timely (SMART) goals and ensure the plan is well communicated to stakeholders, tied to a specific budget, monitored regularly, and reported to the State Board and public on a regular basis.	No	48
1.4.1 Ensure that the State Board of Education maintains an up-to-date online policy, regulations, and bylaws manual aligned to the Strategic Plan, and assign a subcommittee to review and update all documents on a regularly scheduled basis.	No	53
1.5.1 Revise the instrument and process for evaluating the commissioner of education to reflect best practices.	No	56
1.5.2 Create a position description for the Alaska commissioner of education that is in alignment with the State Board of Education strategic goals and Alaska statutory requirements.	No	59
2.1.1 Clarify top priority performance indicators and develop a unified measurement system designed to assess these priority indicators.	No	67
2.1.2 Develop an accountability system whereby performance measures and outcomes will result in specific consequences for students and/or schools.	No	72
3.4.1 Replace the current hard copy, paper-based submission of initial certificate application materials with online, paperless technology.	No	90
3.4.2 Implement an electronic fingerprint scanning process with the Department of Public Safety to expedite the background checks process.	Yes	91
3.4.3 Revise the requirements outlined in AS 14.20.015(b) for teacher applicants to pass basic competency examinations for certification so that unnecessary testing is avoided.	Yes	92

Tier 1 Recommendations	Legislative Action Required	Page
3.5.1 Revamp the coaching model for struggling schools to provide a team-based, integrated program of support and educator development to struggling schools and add emerging technologies for delivery of these services.	No	97
3.5.2 DEED should coordinate the development of, and provide support for, a base curriculum with aligned instructional resources across a select set of academic contents.	No	102
3.6.1 Repeal AS 14.17.520 requiring school districts to spend at least 70 percent of their operating funds on instruction.	Yes	108
4.2.1 Revisit the key partnerships DEED plans to include in its core services, ensure each partnership has established performance measures, and regularly assess the outcomes of the performance or profitability/cost effectiveness measures in order to maintain the partnership.	No	119
4.3.1 Convene meetings with partners to update the CTE plan and ensure the updated plan is posted on the website and communicated clearly to all partners.	No	124
4.4.1 Strengthen the partnership between the State Board of Education and the University Board of Regents to provide effective and efficient interagency support.	No	126
4.5.1 Ensure each DEED partnership has a clear definition and roles within the partnerships, including established goals and metrics.	No	129
4.9.1 Ensure the new commissioner of education formalizes the superintendent working group and allows the group the opportunity for regular input on DEED's initiatives, goals, and programs.	No	141
4.9.2 Ensure the new commissioner of education provides a state of the state education address annually to set the direction of the state's strategic plan and expectations of districts.	No	141

Tier 1 Recommendations	Legislative Action Required	Page
4.9.3 Survey district staff annually to gather input on their issues, needs, and requests, so that DEED can respond appropriately.	No	141
5.2.1 Appoint an official DEED designee for complaints management and provide easy to find, user-friendly links for lodging complaints on the DEED website, and assisting site visitors with finding answers to their questions through DEED.	No	148
5.2.2 Activate a comprehensive group of advisory entities to enhance communication.	No	152
5.2.3 Incorporate input and feedback that is received from enhanced communications and advisement in planning, decision-making, policymaking, and continuous improvement processes.	No	154
6.2.1 Continue to use and pursue best practices for in-house system support.	No	163
6.2.2 Consider model applications in use by other states for implementation in Alaska as the need for replacing or significantly enhancing existing applications arise.	No	163
6.3.1 Serve as a change agent or catalyst for the establishment of statewide strategies and services for increasing the wireless, wide area network, and broadband internet connectivity services to school districts.	No	167
6.5.1 Solicit expertise (particularly from within the state, as well as nationally) to set a clear and comprehensive path forward for technology in Alaska's education system, clarify the role that DEED and other state departments play, and align the state budget with organizational responsibilities to ensure the plan is implemented.	No	171
7.1.1 Eliminate duplication of work processes by DEED, the Professional Teaching Practices Commission (PTPC), and university teacher preparation programs	No	183

Tier 1 Recommendations	Legislative Action Required	Page
9.1.1 Eliminate or modify proposed budget reductions.	Yes	211
10.3.1 Update the Alaska's school bus driver training instructor's manual, post the updated manual on DEED's website, and ensure the additional collection of data involving accidents with no injuries and accidents where the bus driver is at fault.	No	224
10.4.1 Ensure that all DEED staff working with school district transportation services develop a plan to implement recommendations to reduce school district transportation costs.	No	226
10.5.1 Establish a program evaluation and accountability function within DEED to conduct the research and evaluations necessary to make data-driven decisions.	No	228
10.7.1 Continue strategic planning to revise the mission and core services of the Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums so they align with and support DEED's mission, and develop more useful performance measures to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of all three units.	No	232
10.7.2 Use the Curatorial Board to provide guidance and direction to sections of the Library, Archives, and Museum division.	No	235
10.10.1 Work with the legislature and Board of Education to enable facility rentals at the new Library, Archives, and Museum (LAM) building.	Yes	240
10.11.1 Strengthen the coordination of Library, Archives, and Museum (LAM) services with the Division of Teaching and Learning.	No	244
10.15.1 Update the MEHS strategic plan to include data-driven, specific, measureable, attainable, realistic, timely (SMART) goals and ensure that the plan is well communicated to stakeholders, posted on the MEHS website, tied to a specific budget, monitored regularly, and reported to the State Board.	No	254

Tier 1 Recommendations	Legislative Action Required	Page
10.15.2 Administer an anonymous needs assessment to MEHS staff to ensure that their voices are heard in making recommendations for school improvement.	No	255
10.16.1 Place a higher priority on the acceptance of special needs students at MEHS. Ensure that the website and all applications state explicitly that special needs students are eligible to apply, and consider adopting a goal in the new strategic plan geared to enhancing offerings and opportunities for these students.	No	257
10.17.1 Revise the MEHS admissions rating sheet to include specific point ranges with criteria for each of the factors for acceptance to the school.	No	260
10.19.1 Cease expenditures on the planned MEHS aquatics center.	No	263
10.20.1 Consider changing the governance structure of MEHS to a quasi-corporation structure in order to enhance its efficiency and effectiveness.	No	267

Tier 2 Recommendations	Legislative Action Required	Page
3.1.1 Elevate recruitment as a mission-critical activity for DEED leadership and involve the entire department in recruitment planning and implementation.	No	79
3.1.4 Continue to work with the Department of Administration (DOA) to address state government hiring and personnel challenges, and leverage private funding to help address salary challenges.	No	81
4.4.2 Create a strong partnership between DEED and The Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program.	No	127

Tier 2 Recommendations	Legislative Action Required	Page
4.4.3 Create of a memorandum of understanding between DEED and the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program.	No	128
4.7.1 DEED should work with the Department of Administration to educate local school districts about pooled purchasing opportunities, including purchases from state contracts.	No	136
4.9.4 Reduce the number of electronic communications to districts and develop a forum for communication that consolidates routine, non-urgent information sent to superintendents and other need-to-know personnel.	No	141
4.9.5 Compile a list of the state's education accomplishments and prominently post it on DEED's website.	No	142
6.1.1 Adopt a model similar to the Arizona opt-in system for providing a student information system and an individual education program system to local districts.	No	160
6.2.3 Join the Council of Chief State School Officer's Chief Information Officer Network and participate regularly in their meetings.	No	163
6.4.1 Update and enhance DEED's website, and establish a process and accountability system for ensuring that information on the site is kept current and relevant by each division within DEED.	No	169
6.6.1 Establish a data management strategy (and accompanying architecture) for DEED that brings the data together into a repository that can be managed and made available in accordance with the state's privacy and security policies while also being used to improve the quality and usefulness of data to departments and school districts.	No	173

Tier 2 Recommendations	Legislative Action Required	Page
6.8.1 Establish a portal (using SharePoint or another appropriate tool) that DEED can use to create an online presence and train staff to maintain the portals and manage the content.	No	175
6.9.1 Continue to complete the assessment of the political, cost, and technical issues related to providing services such as Microsoft 365 for Education to districts and schools in Alaska.	No	176
6.10.1 Continue to consolidate servers in DEED and work to organize the wiring and data center layout.	No	177
6.11.1 Adopt a project management methodology (such as Pull Planning, PMO, or Deliverology) to be used consistently across DEED for future major initiatives.	No	179
7.1.2 Amend AS 14.20.370-510 Professional Teaching Practices Act to consolidate the work of the Professional Teaching Practices Commission into the Teacher Certification Office's work.	Yes	184
7.1.3 Amend AS 14.20.370-510 such that the Professional Teaching Practices Commission is advisory to the State Board of Education, rather than an entity that renders final administrative decisions in matters of certificate sanctions for educator misconduct.	Yes	185
8.3.1 Initiate steps to make the capital funding application process less cumbersome and the scoring process more straightforward.	No	194
8.4.1 Enhance preventive maintenance training with local school districts.	No	198
8.4.2 DEED should provide local school districts with preventive maintenance best practices and share "frequently-asked questions" and other information that could help districts with limited maintenance resources – especially within the context of compliance with DEED requirements.	No	199

Tier 2 Recommendations	Legislative Action Required	Page
10.13.1 Update DEED's Chart of Accounts to reflect 21st century technology and technology-related services.	No	248
10.13.2 Increase staff training on the DEED Chart of Accounts to create more efficient accounting processes.	No	248
10.15.3 Establish a best practice database on the MEHS website to share best practices statewide.	No	255
10.18.1 Establish a process for developing and adopting, a specific plan for shared services between Mt. Edgecumbe High School and Sitka School District, and begin to implement that plan.	No	262

Tier 3 Recommendations	Legislative Action Required	Page
3.1.2 Develop a departmental recruitment plan that aligns with DEED's strategic plan.	No	80
3.1.3 Continue to identify the primary factors driving employee turnover and enhance employee retention efforts.	No	80
3.2.1 Avoid resurrection of statutory and policy language to include educator evaluation system components that are based on student achievement test data once a new assessment system replaces the AMP.	No[124]	86
4.7.2 Conduct a survey of local districts to evaluate purchasing needs and determine areas for potential partnerships and collaborative purchasing.	No	137

[124] While no legislative action is required, the recommendation advises that the legislature *not* take a specific action.

Tier 3 Recommendations	Legislative Action Required	Page
6.7.1 Continue to consolidate data collections under state report manager and to look for redundancies in data collections from districts and schools.	No	174
8.5.1 DEED should provide districts with information on sustainable building practices.	No	201
8.5.2 DEED should not adopt prototypical designs for schools.	No	202

APPENDIX E: LIST OF DEED COMMENDATIONS

The full report provides a total of 22 commendations.

Below is a list of the commendations and the page number where the commendation can be found in the report.

Commendations	Page #
1.A The State Board and DEED are commended for their work to initiate a robust, visible, and exemplary strategic plan.	48
3.A The Teacher Certification section of DEED has improved significantly in recent years and typically processes teacher certificates and certificate renewals in a timely fashion. The Teacher Certification section is customer-oriented and responsive to districts in the processes related to educator credentialing.	88
3.B DEED is commended for making rapid strides in successfully implementing the programs and standards to fulfill its statutory training and reporting requirements under the Alaska Safe Children's Act (HB44), and for employing innovative methods to do so in a highly economical way.	112
4.A DEED is commended for developing a strong partnership (regarding professional development opportunities) with the Alaska Superintendents' Association (ASA) and the Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA).	118
4.B DEED is commended for assisting in the coordination of a strong partnership with other state entities to improve its career technology education initiatives offered to students and for using a scorecard to measure progress on the plan.	124
4.C DEED is commended for establishing and maintaining partnership to support its early childhood initiatives.	133
4.D DEED is commended for demonstrably improving its communication efforts with various stakeholders.	139
5.A Requests for open records do not reveal a pattern of concerns about DEED. Records indicate that such requests are consistently addressed in a timely fashion by DEED.	146

Commendations	Page #
5.B Few formal complaints are registered against DEED. DEED processes formal complaints in a timely and appropriate manner.	148
6.A DEED is commended for consolidating selected data collections using the state report manager, reducing duplicate data requests and the burden on the districts for reporting data to the state.	174
6.B DEED is commended for identifying the opportunity to provide services such as Microsoft 365 for Education to the districts and schools in Alaska, as well as for appropriately studying the cost savings and practical implications of such an initiative.	176
6.C DEED is commended for its approach of working collaboratively on a strategy of data center reciprocity.	177
6.D The Pull Planning Process (Lean methodology) used by the Division of Libraries Archives and Museums (LAM) for their new facility project is a sound practice for team communications, project management and issue resolution. This methodology has practical application for any major DEED project.	179
8.A DEED is commended for developing an effective process for the evaluation and prioritization of capital projects that incorporates all legislative requirements.	190
8.B DEED is commended for developing a capital project review and prioritization process, and project agreements, that incentivize school districts to utilize best practices in their capital improvement projects and planning.	192
10.A DEED's Food and Nutrition Division is commended for actively pursuing and securing grants to augment its funding sources.	221
10.B DEED is commended for its focused efforts to improve food and nutrition services to districts.	222
10.C The Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums is commended for its innovation in and commitment to providing training and education to local library and museum staff across the state.	231

Commendations	Page #
10.D The Archives Section and the Records Information and Management System program are commended for using best practices in making retention and disposition decisions utilizing best practices and departmental input, as discussed in the above findings.	237
10.E The Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums is commended for its long-term commitment and perseverance in seeking a new facility, its cost-efficient design work and project management, and commitment to working with the community and neighbors in project development.	239
10.F The Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums is commended for its cost-effective outsourcing of the Talking Book Center, which will save the state money and provide additional audio book resources for Alaska residents.	246
10.G DEED is commended for operating a high performing school.	251

This page intentionally left blank.

APPENDIX F: DEED RESPONSE

This page intentionally left blank

THE STATE of ALASKA
GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

Department of Education and Early Development
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

801 W 10th Street, Suite 200
P.O. Box 110500
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0500
Main: 907.465.2800
Fax: 907.465.4156

September 8, 2016

Kris Curtis, Legislative Auditor
Division of Legislative Audit
P.O. Box 113300
Juneau, AK 99811-3300

RECEIVED
SEP 08 2016
LEGISLATIVE AUDIT

Dear Ms. Curtis:

The Department of Education & Early Development (DEED) appreciates the opportunity to respond to the report titled *Performance Review of the Alaska DEED.*

Report Conclusions

The department has reviewed Public Works' summary, findings, and recommendations. The department concurs with the three significant areas in which the review team found DEED to be deficient in accomplishing our mission. The department is already taking strides towards developing a clear and coherent mission, vision, and strategic plan. In addition, the department will continue to seek out opportunities for collaboration and active partnerships with government entities, and other public and private organizations. Finally, the department will continue to assist school districts in the areas mentioned in order to increase the statewide graduation rate.

Furthermore, while the department concurs with many of the recommendations presented in the report, implementation of the recommendations is the department's main issue as the capacity, both in resources and funding, to do so is limited. The State Board of Education & Early Development and the Commissioner will need to identify which of these recommendations are most important to which to allocate the department's limited resources and capacity.

Recommendation 1.1.1

Alter the current governance structure of DEED to ensure role clarity and establish a clear reporting structure for the commissioner of education position. (Tier 1)

The department cannot concur with recommendation 1.1.1. The current structure of the department is in AS 14.07.085 and must be adhered to in order to comply with state law. Legislative action would be required to use a different model than what is currently in place. While the Commissioner and the State Board of Education & Early Development may commit to learning more about the various models used by many other states, they are not in a position to make any changes regarding governance structure for the department.

Recommendation 1.2.1
Clearly define the State Board of Education's role and ensure the role is communicated to all stakeholders and allow the clearly defined role to drive Board decisions. (Tier 1)

The department concurs with recommendation 1.2.1. The State Board of Education & Early Development is comprised of dedicated individuals who consider their responsibilities seriously. They view themselves as policymakers, advocates for education, liaisons between educators and those involved in education policy, as well as reaching the general public including those who do not have school age children.

Recommendation 1.2.2
Increase the level of State Board of Education members' training and professional development. (Tier 1)

The department concurs with recommendation 1.2.2. The State Board of Education & Early Development (SBOE) is ready to seek this opportunity that is available to them without the use of funding necessary for the education of youth. Department staff continue to report to the SBOE at each meeting on best practices, the current workings of each division, written reports included in the board packet on information necessary for them to be apprised of, and new or innovative projects and programs. Additionally, staff are at all meetings to ensure clear communication, and to answer questions that may arise. Unfortunately funds are not available to pursue national membership and travel outside the state for further professional development at this time. SBOE members are involved in state education conferences as their schedules allow.

Recommendation 1.2.3
Consider becoming a member of the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE). (Tier 1)

The department concurs with recommendation 1.2.3. Unfortunately the membership to the organization may be cost prohibitive and must be weighed against other needs that the State Board of Education & Early Development (SBOE) may wish to invest. Currently, the SBOE has chosen three major areas of focus. It may be that joining this organization will be a benefit to moving forward on the three priorities but consideration will be given to the benefits as outlined in the recommendation and the SBOE will make a determination as they evaluate their group's needs.

Recommendation 1.2.4
Conduct annual State Board self-evaluations. (Tier 1)

The department concurs with recommendation 1.2.4. The State Board of Education & Early Development appreciates the delineation of the questions presented in the report. Their self-reflection will be a determining factor as they meet together to make plans for the coming fiscal year. They are aware that this is a necessity to carry out their responsibilities and that it should be done prior to the evaluation of the Commissioner.

Recommendation 1.3.1
Ensure the new DEED strategic plan is data-driven, with specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, timely (SMART) goals and ensure the plan is well communicated to stakeholders, tied to a specific budget, monitored regularly, and reported to the State Board and public on a regular basis. (Tier 1)

The department concurs with recommendation 1.3.1. Plans are in place by the State Board of Education & Early Development (SBOE) to continue the dialogue in a retreat format in mid-September 2016. Next steps on continued professional learning will be the target as they strive to be the best that they can be for the students and staff around Alaska. Consideration of what is necessary to involve a wide range of stakeholders and that their plan is communicated state-wide is important to them. In June 2016 the SBOE heard more about the Baldrige Performance Excellence Performance and is in the process of making decisions as to the department's needs to be addressed and the possible use of this framework. Additionally, SBOE members will seek information from the plans that are highlighted in the final Public Works report and gather information that has been valuable in states such as Kentucky, Mississippi, and North Carolina. Again, as previously noted, cost, staff availability, and insufficient time will drive many of the decisions that the SBOE considers.

Recommendation 1.4.1
Ensure that the State Board of Education maintains an up-to-date online policy, regulations, and bylaws manual aligned to the State Board's Strategic Plan, and assign a subcommittee to review and update all documents on a regularly scheduled basis. (Tier 1)

The department concurs with recommendation 1.4.1. Moving forward with this recommendation will be impacted by the limited and decreasing numbers of department staff as well as the overall commitment that the State Board of Education & Early Development (SBOE) makes currently as volunteers. Department staff and SBOE members will look into using the free on-line resources suggested.

Recommendation 1.5.1
Revise the instrument and process for evaluating the commissioner of education to reflect best practices. (Tier 1)

The department concurs with recommendation 1.5.1. It is understood that as the State Board of Education & Early Development (SBOE) continues to work through their strategic process, they should consider the instrument used in the evaluation of the Commissioner. The Council of Chief State School Officer's (CCSSO) materials may be used as a guide to lead their discussions and subsequent formulation of a document that addresses moving toward the selected goals of the SBOE.

Recommendation 1.5.2
Create a position description for the Alaska commissioner of education that is in alignment with the State Board of Education strategic goals and Alaska statutory requirements. (Tier 1)

The department concurs with recommendation 1.5.2. Roles and responsibilities should be addressed in a position description for the Commissioner with consideration and caution to the legality of the document.

Recommendation 2.1.1
Clarify top priority performance indicators and develop a unified measurement system designed to assess these priority indicators. (Tier 1)

The department concurs with recommendation 2.1.1. Between the State Board of Education & Early Development's continued work on the *Alaska State Board of Education Strategic Priorities*, and through the work of the Superintendent's working group, the department believes it can work together to determine priority performance indicators and develop a unified measurement system which is all tied back to the strategic priorities.

Recommendation 2.1.2
Develop an accountability system whereby performance measures and outcomes will result in specific consequences for students and/or schools. (Tier 1)

The department concurs with recommendation 2.1.2 in that it needs to determine if the current system of educational assessments and performance measures are designed to meet Alaska's educational needs. The department will look into the Council of Chief State School Officer's (CCSSO) accountability system training materials to see what may be useful to help in achieving specific consequences for students and/or schools.

Recommendation 3.1.1
Elevate recruitment as a mission-critical activity for DEED leadership and involve the entire department in recruitment planning and implementation. (Tier 2)

The department concurs with recommendation 3.1.1. The department's Human Resource (HR) Consultant meets at least monthly with division leadership to discuss personnel issues. A component can be added to these meetings to ensure that succession planning is occurring within each division and that knowledge transfer plans are being created. Additionally, each division can provide a list of resources available for recruiting candidates in their specialized fields outside of the current employees of the department. For example, the Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums can provide a list of periodicals the Archives unit subscribes to and list-servs the division participates in. When specialized vacancies occur unexpectedly, these can be used as additional advertising for applicants. This has occurred occasionally for specialized positions, but a standing list of resources has not yet been created.

Recommendation 3.1.2
Develop a departmental recruitment plan that aligns with DEED's strategic plan. (Tier 3)

The department concurs with recommendation 3.1.2. The department needs to ensure that the recruitment process is aligned with the direction the department is going. The current strategic plan has not been widely distributed to current staff, and is never referenced in recruitment efforts. Recruitments focus on concrete skills necessary for applicants to perform the functions

of the position, but do not describe the commitment to a direction the department is seeking, the creativity and inspiration noted in the strategic plan. Recruitment efforts have not considered the "fit" of the candidate to the mission of the organization.

As changes are made to the department's strategic plan, the Human Resource (HR) Consultant will be kept apprised in order to ensure that updates to the recruitment plan are made to ensure alignment.

In coordination with division management, the HR Consultant will need to determine which qualities the department is seeking in successful candidates, in addition to the desired training and skills. Recruitment efforts would be tailored to appeal to candidates with those qualities. In addition, the department will look into expanded recruitment efforts to include alternate recruitment methods, such as attendance at job fairs.

Recommendation 3.1.3
Continue to identify the primary factors driving employee turnover and enhance employee retention efforts. (Tier 3)

The department concurs with recommendation 3.1.3. The department will continue to utilize the employee exit survey conducted by the Department of Administration, Division of Personnel and Labor Relations, for identifying reasons that turnover exists within the department and to enhance employee retention efforts.

Recommendation 3.1.4
Continue to work with the Department of Administration (DOA) to address the state government hiring and personnel challenges, and leverage private funding to help address salary challenges. (Tier 2)

The department does not concur with recommendation 3.1.4. While the department may be able to leverage private grant funding to address funding positions, having that funding would not change the salary at which incumbents of positions were paid. The salary range of a position in the State of Alaska's classified service is determined by the Department of Administration and is not based on the department's ability to pay that salary.

While the department could work to make the certificated positions mirror the work year of school district personnel, this would result in a 20% pay cut to those positions as they would be on seasonal layoff for two and a half months each year. The department would still not have the authority to raise the base pay level to match what school districts offer for their 9-10 month positions. Additionally, this could result in further difficulty for the department in hiring for difficult to fill job classes which are not certificated, as there would be disparity between the expected work-year of employees in the department.

Recommendation 3.2.1
Avoid resurrection of statutory and policy language to include educator evaluation system components that are based on student achievement test data once a new assessment system replaces the AMP. (Tier 3)

The department concurs with recommendation 3.2.1. The department will continue to track what other states are experiencing as they implement educator evaluation systems based on student achievement test data. In addition, the department will use information gathered to inform policymakers of important considerations around implementation of this approach.

Recommendation 3.4.1

Replace the current hard copy, paper-based submission of initial certificate application materials with online, paperless technology. (Tier 1)

The department concurs with recommendation 3.4.1. By December 31, 2016, the department will develop a plan, a timeline, and a cost estimate for moving all applications and forms to an online environment.

Recommendation 3.4.2

Implement an electronic fingerprint scanning process with the Department of Public Safety to expedite the background checks process. (Tier 1)

The department concurs with recommendation 3.4.2. By the end of the current fiscal year, the department will contact the Department of Public Safety to determine if there is a long-term plan to move from the paper-based fingerprinting process to an electronic process. In addition, the department will inquire what role, if any, that we could play in moving a transition plan forward.

Recommendation 3.4.3

Revise the requirements outlined in Alaska statute 14.20.015(b) for teacher applicants to pass basic competency examinations for certification so that unnecessary testing is avoided. (Tier 1)

The department concurs with recommendation 3.4.3. The department believes that action on this recommendation will need to be taken by the Governor's office and the legislative bodies. In the interim, the department will continue to expand the options available to teachers, new to Alaska, in meeting the basic competency examination requirements.

Recommendation 3.5.1

Revamp the coaching model for struggling schools to provide a team-based, integrated program of support and educator development to struggling schools and add emerging technologies for delivery of these services. (Tier 1)

The department concurs with recommendation 3.5.l but also recognizes the current state fiscal situation and that additional resources will be very limited in future years for implementation of this recommendation. Current funding is having an important impact on schools that are most in need. Department staff and State System of Support (SSOS) coaches work collaboratively with district superintendents on placement of coaches each year. In one district, the SSOS coach has seen multiple superintendents and principal turnover and is one of the longest standing educators for the district. Coaches are taking advantage of district available technologies, but recognizes that each district has unique technological challenges. Many of the recommendations of the

Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) are being met with the limited, but important, funding the department receives.

Recommendation 3.5.2
Coordinate the development of, and provide support for, a base curriculum with aligned instructional resources across a select set of academic contents. (Tier **1)**

The department does not concur with recommendation 3.5.2. The recommendation that the department provide a base curriculum would require statutory and regulatory changes. In addition, the department does not have the capacity to lead this work as recommended. Furthermore, it may be possible for the department to partner with other organizations to accomplish this recommendations, but at this time, these changes would require additional funding and the department does not have the capacity on its own to accomplish or take a lead role in this work.

Recommendation 3.6.1
Repeal AS 14.17.520 requiring school districts to spend at least 70 percent of their operating funds on instruction. (Tier 1)

The department cannot repeal statutes at the agency level; however, as noted in the Public Works findings, the State Board of Education & Early Development has recommended repeal of the minimum expenditure for instruction law through board resolution 3-2015. HB156, Chapter 54, SLA16, which included a provision to repeal the minimum expenditure for instruction law at AS 14.17.520, becomes law effective October 26, 2016.

Recommendation 4.2.1
Revisit the key partnerships DEED plans to include in its core services, ensure each partnership has established performance measures, and regularly assess the outcomes of the performance or profitability/cost effectiveness measures in order to maintain the partnership. (Tier **1)**

The department concurs with recommendation 4.2.1. It is the hope of the State Board of Education & Early Development and the Commissioner to maintain working partnerships with the organizations, agencies, and associations mentioned and to discuss the ways in which they might collect data to uphold their performance in maintaining the existing relationship. Inthe next school year, the department will expect Mt. Edgecumbe High School to effectively review their specific strategic plan and to measure the strategies as written. The noted Alaska Autism Resource Center (AARC) performance measures may be an example that will assist other organizations.

Recommendation 4.3.1
Convene meetings with partners to update the CTE plan and ensure the updated plan is posted on the website and communicated clearly to all partners. (Tier 1)

The department concurs with recommendation 4.3.1. Over the next fiscal year, the department will take actions necessary to work with partners to update the CTE plan in the areas noted in the

recommendation. Once updated, the plan will be posted on the department's website and clearly communicated to all partners.

Recommendation 4.4.1
Strengthen the partnership between the State Board of Education and the University Board of Regents to provide effective and efficient interagency support. (Tier 1)

The department concurs with recommendation 4.4.1. This partnership is vital to the state as both UA Statewide and the department should work collectively as to the interest both parties have in K-16 education, despite the significant financial challenges. On September 14, 2016, the two entities will meet in a face-to-face half day joint meeting at the UAS campus in Juneau.

Recommendation 4.4.2
Create a strong partnership between DEED and The Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program. (Tier 2)

The department concurs with recommendation 4.4.2. Starting in FY2017, the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program (ANSEP) will no longer receive any funding through the department's budget. ANSEP still remains a part of the University of Alaska and will continue to provide opportunities for high school and middle school students, and therefore be a welcomed partner in science, mathematics, and technology.

Recommendation 4.4.3
Create a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between DEED and ANSEP. (Tier 2)

The department does not concur with recommendation 4.4.3. The department understands that ANSEP is a good program, but it is housed under the University of Alaska and receives funding through them as well as various organizations, strategic partners, and private individuals. Based on this, the department does not believe there will be a need for a memorandum of understanding. The department will continue to encourage districts, families, and students to access ANSEP and experience the programs they provide.

Recommendation 4.5.1
Ensure each DEED partnership has a clear definition and roles within the partnerships, including established goals and metrics. (Tier 1)

The department concurs with recommendation 4.5.1. Establishing the roles of the partnerships, and the goals and needs for measurement of successes will continue to be important. The department only has so much control over other agencies and organizations, but will attempt to focus on the eventuality of more organized, data-driven partnerships.

Recommendation 4.7.1
DEED should work with the Department of Administration to educate local school districts about pooled purchasing opportunities, including purchases from state contracts. (Tier 2)

The department concurs with recommendation 4.7.1. The department will work with the Department of Administration to educate local school districts about pooled purchasing opportunities. The department will also look into the possibility of providing a yearly training opportunity to local districts and provide them with information on where to find more information and get updates, as well as encourage them to utilize state contracts.

Recommendation 4.7.2
Conduct a survey of local districts to evaluate purchasing needs and determine areas for potential partnerships and collaborative purchasing. (Tier 3)

The department concurs with recommendation 4.7.2. The department will work with the Department of Administration to develop a survey for local school districts to complete that will inform the department about the products and services being purchased at the local level, as well as determine areas of potential partnerships and collaborative purchasing.

Recommendation 4.9.1
Ensure the new commissioner of education formalizes the superintendent working group and allows the group the opportunity for regular input on DEED's initiatives, goals, and programs. (Tier 1)

The department concurs with recommendation 4.9.1. The department has held meetings with the district superintendents on a pre-scheduled monthly basis. Additionally, the department has had audio conference calls on an as-needed basis on individual topics of interest to the department and districts. It will be an expectation that the current Commissioner will continue to discuss regular information and accept feedback from the superintendents around the state and have contact through the group of elected members of the Alaska Superintendents Association representing the membership-at-large.

Recommendation 4.9.2
Ensure the new commissioner of education provides a state of the state education address annually to set the direction of the state's strategic plan and expectations of districts. (Tier 1)

The department concurs with recommendation 4.9.2. The current Commissioner has been advised that a state of the state address may be an expectation of the State Board of Education & Early Development (SBOE) and that it should be a time to share the SBOE's direction and their expectation and goals for the overall department.

Recommendation 4.9.3
Survey district staff annually to gather input on their issues, needs, and requests, so that DEED can respond appropriately. (Tier 1)

The department concurs with recommendation 4.9.3. A survey to gather input from district staff may be appropriate and will be a decision of the State Board of Education & Early Development (SBOE). The SBOE recognizes its role and their first priority as listed in their strategic plan. Empowering local control of educational decisions is a strong commitment that the SBOE has.

Recommendation 4.9.4

Reduce the number of electronic communications to districts and develop a forum for communication that consolidates routine, non-urgent information sent to superintendents and other need-to-know personnel. (Tier 2)

The department concurs with recommendation 4.9.4. The State Board of Education & Early Development and the Commissioner will consider the use of modem technological communication with the school districts and other persons interested in important education information. Information from Florida, Texas, Illinois, Vermont, and Maryland will be resources that can be screened and used as appropriate to the style of delivery of information. That being said, email has been an effective way to distribute information and is timely and direct to the reader. The department will take this recommendation seriously and be cautious of over use.

Recommendation 4.9.5

Compile a list of the state's education accomplishments and prominently post it on DEED's website. (Tier 2)

The department concurs with recommendation 4.9.5. At this time the department uses different ways to transmit information and to acknowledge accomplishments of individual district's students and staff, as well as department staff. In each case, all of the appropriate written releases from individuals, parents of juveniles, etc. must be in place in the school district or at the department to do any of the postings. There is a weekly department newsletter titled "Information Exchange" which is distributed across the state. An open department Facebook page has gained attention as well. Public notices are sent to the news media for such acknowledgements as Teacher of the Year, Blue Ribbon Schools, and other national recognition of students, staff, and the department. The department's website additions, changes, and deletions must be made through a channel of electronic experts and also be in keeping with the expectations of the Governor's Office. Department staff will look into the possibilities within the website. With limited financial and human resources, the department will try to comply with this recommendation.

Recommendation 5.2.1

Appoint an official DEED designee for complaints management and provide easy to find, user- friendly links for lodging complaints on the DEED website, and assisting site visitors with finding answers to their questions through DEED. (Tier 1)

The department concurs with recommendation 5.2.1. Currently any concerns and complaints are addressed by the individual to whom the communication is addressed or moved to the Commissioner's Office for further review. The concern is researched with and through any and all parties who may have factual evidence to move toward a response and/or resolution. Within the state, each written concern is acknowledged in a timely manner given the fiscal and human constraints. The website arrangement, questions and answers, and a prominent place to acknowledge complaints will be considered as the State Board of Education & Early Development addresses modernizing the state's educational system.

Recommendation 5.2.2
Activate a comprehensive group of advisory entities to enhance communication. (Tier **1)**

The department concurs with recommendation 5.2.2. Information from the states provided will be a good resource for the State Board of Education & Early Development (SBOE) and Commissioner as they attempt to address the recommendations from Public Works. It appears that the structure that Oklahoma has presented will be a model the SBOE might use along with added student perspective as in North Carolina. This will fit well with the SBOE's interest in empowering local control and ensuring that all voices are heard.

Recommendation 5.2.3
Incorporate input and feedback that is received from enhanced communications and advisement into planning, decision-making, policymaking, and continuous improvement processes. (Tier 1)

The department concurs with recommendation 5.2.3. When the State Board of Education & Early Development (SBOE) has the finances, personnel, and time to put many of the points into place, they will use the feedback from the specific guidance with focus on the department and to meet the intent of enhanced communication and continuous improvement. The SBOE's Strategic Priorities adopted in December 2015 specifically addresses improving the process of support to school districts using local governance input and feedback regarding decisions made.

Recommendation 6.1.1
Adopt a model similar to the Arizona opt-in system for providing a student information system and an individual education program system to local districts. (Tier 2)

The department concurs with recommendation 6.1.1. The department recognizes that there can be efficiencies in cost and function in providing a student information system and an IEP system that local districts may choose to use. The department will consider ways to implement this recommendation within the priorities and funding available.

Recommendation 6.2.1
Continue to use and pursue best practices for in-house system support. (Tier 1)

The department concurs with recommendation 6.2.1. The department IT staff will continue to follow best practices in good system documentation, training, and staff retention to the extent possible through reductions in funding and staff.

Recommendation 6.2.2
Consider model applications in use by other states for implementation in Alaska as the need for replacing or significantly enhancing existing applications arise. (Tier 1)

The department concurs with recommendation 6.2.2. The department will first consider available systems from other state education agencies that may be modified for Alaska use to provide efficiencies both in function and cost before investing in the purchase of a new system or in-house development.

Recommendation 6.2.3
Join the Council of Chief State School Officer's Chief lnformation Officer Network and participate regularly in their meetings. (Tier 2)

The department concurs with recommendation 6.2.3. The department recognizes and values the support of the Council of Chief State School Officer's (CCSSO) organization and will take this recommendation into account based on available resources in FY2017 and beyond.

Recommendation 6.3.1
Serve as a change agent or catalyst for the establishment of statewide strategies and services for increasing the wireless, wide area network, and broadband internet connectivity services to school districts. (Tier 1)

The department does not concur with recommendation 6.3.1. Increasing the wireless, wide area network, and broadband internet connectivity services to school districts has been a statewide issue for the past few years. There have been numerous discussions regarding this, which have included other State of Alaska departments, the legislature, and service providers from across the state. While the department understands the importance of the need for increased technology in the classroom, this is a statewide initiative that needs to be addressed at the statewide level. The department is willing to continue to be a part of the statewide discussions, but this cannot be done by the Department of Education & Early Development alone. For further information about the extreme challenges and costs of providing high speed broadband statewide, please refer to: *A Blueprint for Alaska 's Broadband Future: A Report from the Statewide Broadband Task Force* (August 2013), http://www.alaska.edu/files/oit/bbtaskforce/2013-08-AK-Broadband-Task-Force-Report%7CA-Blueprint-for-Alaska's-Broadband-Future.pdf.

Recommendation 6.4.1
Update and enhance DEED's website, and establish a process and accountability system for ensuring that information on the site is kept current and relevant by each division within DEED. (Tier 2)

The department concurs with recommendation 6.4.1. Even though the department recently went through an update to the website, additional updates and other modifications are still needed, such as ensuring there is a site for each of the department's divisions that can be easily located. Given the limited, knowledgeable staff within the department who have expertise for website design, these updates and modifications will take time and additional funding may be necessary if an outside contractor is hired to help accomplish the work. The department will also take steps to implement a process and accountability system for ensuring that information is kept current and relevant.

Recommendation 6.5.1
Solicit expertise (particularly from within the state, as well as nationally) to set a clear and comprehensive path forward for technology in Alaska's education system, clarify the role that DEED and other state departments play, and align the state budget with organizational responsibilities to ensure the plan is implemented. (Tier 1)

The department concurs with recommendation 6.5.1. It is the hope that the department will have the support necessary to move in the direction of improved learning, greater student achievement, and professional development for staff. Technology within the system is being looked at closely at this time. The cost for modification and enhanced usage is and will continue to be extremely costly. Working with districts to provide various ways to deliver instruction, communicate with the public, and to broaden the opportunities for students and staff to develop on their own level technologically, academically, and professionally will be challenging based on the needs of the districts and the expertise on staff. Simple solicitation of advice is often cost prohibitive. The department will strive to move forward in this area, as Priority #2 also speaks to the effective use of technology.

Recommendation 6.6.1
Establish a data management strategy (and accompanying architecture) for DEED that brings the data together into a repository that can be managed and made available in accordance with the state's privacy and security policies while also being used to improve the quality and usefulness of data to departments and school districts. (Tier 2)

The department concurs with recommendation 6.6.1. The department currently has a contract with a vendor to house the Data Interaction for Alaska Student Assessments, which represents a part of this recommendation. This recommendation is more expansive in that it recommends a teacher resource library, an early warning system, and a section for communities. The department will consider these additional options and ways to incorporate them through addressing both the work of developing the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) State Plan and addressing the State Board of Education & Early Development's strategic plan.

Recommendation 6.7.1
Continue to consolidate data collections under state report manger and to look for redundancies in data collections from districts and schools. (Tier 3)

The department concurs with recommendation 6.7.1. The department will continue to implement this recommendation as it has been doing over the past several years.

Recommendation 6.8.1
Establish a portal (using SharePoint or another appropriate tool) that DEED can use to create an online presence and train staff to maintain the portals and manage the content. (Tier 2)

The department concurs with recommendation 6.8.1. The department will consider this recommendation and ways to incorporate it through addressing both the work of developing the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) State Plan and addressing the State Board of Education & Early Development's strategic plan.

Recommendation 6.9.1
Continue to complete the assessment of the political, cost, and technical issues related to providing services such as Microsoft 365 for Education to districts and schools in Alaska. (Tier 2)

The department concurs in part with recommendation 6.9.1. While the department will continue to monitor the political, cost, and technical issues related to converting to services such as Microsoft 365, there will likely be an additional fiscal impact beyond what is currently allocated for this purpose. The reason for this has to do with the significant educational discounts the department receives from Microsoft, and whether or not the department will remain as-is with the current Microsoft contract, or to fully incorporate Microsoft 365. Both options are anticipated to cost the department more, and the department is currently analyzing the best option with the least fiscal impact. The option the department selects could also have an effect on what, if any resources, could be made available to districts and schools in Alaska.

Recommendation 6.10.1

Continue to consolidate servers in DEED and work to organize the wiring and data center layout. (Tier 2)

The department concurs with recommendation 6.10.1. The department will continue to consolidate services in the department and work to organize the wiring and data center layout. Furthermore, the department is always looking for more innovative and cost saving measures. The department will continue to review options and weigh benefits against challenges between a private data center and a leased cage/rack space or a cloud-based environment.

Recommendation 6.11.1

Adopt a project management methodology such as Pull Planning, Project Management Office, or Deliverology to be used consistently across DEED for future major initiatives. (Tier 2)

The department concurs with recommendation 6.11.1. While pull planning is a tracking process primarily aimed at transforming construction project delivery, the Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums has had significant success using it as a general project planning, tracking, and execution tool. The department will look further into this methodology to see if it would be feasible to adopt. As with the adoption of most things, there will likely be a fiscal impact to the department, as the instruction alone will not be free.

Recommendation 7.1.1

Eliminate duplication of work processes by the Professional Teaching Practices Commission (PTPC) and university teacher preparation programs, and by PTPC and DEED. (Tier 1)

The department does not concur with the first part of recommendation 7.1.1. The report describes the duplication of services between university teacher preparation programs and the Professional Teaching Practices Commission (PTPC) in providing professional ethics training to candidates in those programs. The training provided is specific to the Alaska Code of Ethics of the Education Profession and PTPC; it is *not* a general professional ethics training.

University educator preparation programs (teacher, principal, and superintendent) have used the expertise of guest speakers from PTPC in their classes for many years. They want their students to hear the information direct from the source – the PTPC Executive Director. With cuts to the university system, we are concerned that this information will be deleted and future teachers and administrators will not get this valuable and pertinent information if left to the university.

The budget savings with elimination of these presentations would be minimal. The vast majority of presentations start late in the afternoon (4:00 p.m. or later) and are after regular working hours (no overtime costs to the State nor loss of work time). At least half of the presentations are distance delivered, keeping travel costs at a minimum. All in-person presentations are local to Anchorage (except one trip annually to University of Alaska Fairbanks) and therefore incur no additional costs.

The loss of staying connected with the university educator preparation programs and presenting a positive and proactive approach to the Alaska Code of Ethics, although hard to put in financial terms, would far surpass any small monetary gain with elimination of these presentations that higher education instructors have come to expect. The loss of good public relations between the universities and the State is not worth the minimal dollar savings. These presentations are an expectation of the Executive Director and can be maintained within the current workload.

With regards to the department's Teacher Certification Office and PTPC, the department concurs that there are some work processes divided between the Teacher Certification Office and PTPC that can be further delineated and refined, resulting in operational efficiencies for both offices. The two main areas are denial of certification (for misconduct reasons - not "paperwork" or procedural issues) and reporting of sanctions to the NASDTEC Clearinghouse (who actually uploads the information). The Administrator for Teacher Certification and the PTPC Executive Director need to meet and work out procedural changes that will result in efficiencies. PTPC deals with misconduct issues of any nature, both pre-service and in-service; whereas the Teacher Certification Office deals with the processing of applications. In some cases those two roles overlap, so efficiencies can be gained by realigning some of the work processes. Some changes to statutes or regulations may be required. It should be noted that these areas of "overlap" constitute less than five percent of the work of the PTPC. The PTPC office could easily take over the job of reporting sanctions to the NASDTEC Clearinghouse.

Recommendation 7.1.2

Amend AS 14.20.370-510 Professional Teaching Practices Act to consolidate the work of the Professional Teaching Practices Commission into the Teacher Certification Office's work. (Tier 2)

The department fundamentally does not concur with recommendation 7.1.2. However, there are some aspects of this recommendation that the department does concur with and we have already taken steps towards implementation.

When the Alaska State Legislature passed the Professional Teaching Practices Act (AS 14.20) in 1966, the design and structure of the PTPC was to create an *independent* body to deal primarily with matters of educator misconduct. The Executive Director answers to the nine-member commission, each of whom are appointed by the governor and confirmed by the legislature. To place the PTPC within the Teacher Certification Office, and therefore directly under the supervision of the Commissioner, would remove the independence that is necessary for effective functioning of the PTPC, and not comply with state law. It must be very clear to everyone,

especially those in the education profession, that the Commissioner does not have any control or supervisory authority over the mission of the PTPC.

That being said, some of the day-to-day administrative business of the PTPC can be handled by general administrative support within the department. Job duties such as payroll, time sheets, leave slips, travel paperwork, reimbursements, purchasing of supplies, etc. can be taken over by an existing position within the department. However, the main mission of the PTPC, that of educator misconduct, should not be placed in the Teacher Certification Office, nor in any other office or division within the department.

The administrator duties of the PTPC Executive Director are minimal. Thus, even shifting some support services outside of the PTPC would not affect enough reduction in workload of the Executive Director to reduce the position to part-time, as mentioned in the narrative on page 184 of the report. Any time saved by reduction in administrative duties, specifically in supervision of the PTPC administrative assistant, would undoubtedly be consumed in doing some of those duties themselves.

Recommendation 7.1.3

Amend AS 14.20.370-510 such that the PTPC is advisory to the State Board of Education, rather than an entity that renders final administrative decisions in matters of certificate sanctions for educator misconduct. (Tier 2)

The department does not concur with recommendation 7.1.3. This recommendation cuts to the core structure of the PTPC and is promoting a systemic change to the PTPC with the implication that the current PTPC structure is not working as efficiently or effectively as possible. Systems and organizations can always be improved. However, with the overall small size of the PTPC budget, minor modifications would be more appropriate as opposed to a major overhaul. Furthermore, PTPC is funded solely by teacher certification receipts. Additional reductions to the PTPC budget would not result in any real direct savings to the state's budget.

If this recommendation would come to fruition, it would result in a new duplication of services, something the department is working to eliminate. The PTPC would do all of the "leg work" concerning specific educator misconduct cases. They would pass that information on to the State Board of Education & Early Development (SBOE), who would either accept their recommendation (a duplication) or the SBOE would do further research and investigation (a duplication).

The PTPC board is made up of nine educators who have been vetted by many different organizations and agencies (including the legislature) before they can serve on the board. These nine people are clearly qualified to sanction educators. They do not need another body to oversee their decisions. In addition, it is not clear that the SBOE has the time, the expertise, or even the desire to deal with educator misconduct issues. Finally, legal challenges to educator sanctions are minimal and it is not clear how making the PTPC advisory to the SBOE would result in increased efficiency.

Although some states (12) are structured such that their Educator Standards Board are advisory to their State Board of Education, there are thirteen (13) states, including Alaska, that have Independent Standards Boards that deal with educator misconduct. (NASDTEC 2009 Status of Educator Standard Boards).
http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.nasdtec.net/resource /collection/97608343-51F6-44Fl-B39D-093A3B2F930F/ISB_Report_Final_6-8-10.pdf)

Recommendation 8.3.1
Initiate steps to make the capital funding application process less cumbersome and the scoring process more straightforward. (Tier 2)

The department does not concur with recommendation 8.3.1. The recommendation does not explain the criteria, provide an in-depth discussion, or support the finding that the application is "unnecessarily cumbersome." The department has recently completed a multi-year application review public process through the Bond Reimbursement and Grant Review Committee (BRGR); the committee is in statute at AS 14.11.014. The BRGR agendas, meetings, and meeting minutes are available on the department's website under the Facilities section. While the department intends to continue to review the CIP process and appreciates the six specific items Public Works offers and will consider these items, it would be erroneous for the department to agree to rework an application that was recently vetted by the public and stakeholders, approved by the BRGR committee, and is well serving the State of Alaska. The department does not intend to change the application for small components on a year-to-year basis because this is burdensome to districts, distracts from consistent scoring, and would not allow the state or department stakeholders to take a long view of the application process and study for best practices, accountability, and usefulness.

To the extent that the Public Works' items are housekeeping or could otherwise be implemented without a full scale change and disruption to the on-going process, the department will review and make changes. For example, the Public Works' bullet four notes that the scoring sheet is in a different order than the application. While both documents are clear and work well, the scoring sheet was not reordered at the time of the application update and the department will ensure this is completed at the first opportunity.

The department acknowledges the merit of the Public Works' discussion and will continue to review similar elements, for example bullet one suggests redundant or similar requirements should be eliminated or merged; that viewpoint was included in the last update and will continue to be considered in future updates. It is worth noting that the application questions and order is intentional to meet the goals of a well vetted project that will be successful. Significant discussion took place around not only the information sought but the order of the questions. While the first four are predominantly housekeeping type items, the final two either suggest or outright recommend changes to the CIP scoring point structure. Changes to the weighting of points within the scoring process requires a greater measure of research and consideration to ensure the benefits are clear and that those benefits are equitable among all districts. Again, the updated application did make point weight changes such as reducing the points available for professional drawings in order to respond to stakeholder concerns. The department also took efforts to address concerns around the perception or actual issue of a cumbersome application.

The department's Commissioner at the time charged staff to provide an application that could be completed in-house by small districts and that effort is reflected in the current application. The application process provides flexibility around in-house prepared condition surveys. One should not assume there is a deficiency that the application for competitive grant funds is not quick and short; these projects are not typical maintenance expenditures, these are major maintenance projects and construction projects with costs routinely in the millions of dollars. The application is suited to secure a successful project with a workable cost effective budget in the best interest of districts and the state.

Recommendation 8.4.1
Enhance preventive maintenance training with local school districts. (Tier 2)

The department concurs with the intent of recommendation 8.4.1 in that preventive maintenance training for local school districts and the department will prioritize updating the department's handbook and presenting the updated handbook to school districts. The department appreciates the acknowledgment that the primary responsibility for preventive maintenance is with individual school districts through their boards. The department concurs being active participants in these processes through the statutorily-derived oversight requirements with respect to CIP eligibility. Furthermore, the department seeks every opportunity to support preventive maintenance at schools and will continue to support preventive maintenance to school districts across the state.

Recommendation 8.4.2
DEED should provide local school districts with preventive maintenance best practices and share "frequently-asked questions" and other information that could help districts with limited maintenance resources – especially within the context of compliance with DEED requirements. (Tier 2)

The department concurs with the intent of recommendation 8.4.2 and sharing best practices statewide. The department appreciates the essential focus on assisting districts in their compliance with department requirements. With regard to the development of an FAQ database and online bulletin board, the department remains unconvinced that investing in, and initiating a department-specific online bulletin board is effort well spent given that there are several of those being made available by other facilities organizations. The department, specifically the Facilities section, will review the Public Works' discussion and will seek to connect districts to resources. The department supports the development and sharing of best practices and lessons learned.

Recommendation 8.5.1
DEED should provide districts with information on sustainable building practices. (Tier 3)

The department acknowledges the value of standards related to high-performance buildings and sustainability. Staff within the department have been tracking the initiatives of various code and industry bodies to develop and implement such standards. The department will continue to track these developments and concur with the specific recommendation of making information and guidance available to interested districts.

Recommendation 8.5.2
DEED should not adopt prototypical designs for schools. (Tier 3)

The department appreciates and has taken note of Public Works' perspective on the prototypical school report produced in October 2015.

Recommendation 9.1.1
Eliminate or modify proposed budget reductions. (Tier 1)

The department does not concur with recommendation 9.1.1. Due to the timing of this report, the suggestions to modify the proposed budget reductions are too late as the Legislature and Governor have already made their decisions on the department's budget for FY2017. The November 16, 2015 proposed budget reductions differ than what was enacted in June 2016, with the exception of the removal of $525,000 in College and Career Readiness funding;; t the $66,000 for prototypical design study; the $25,000 Alaska Resource Education grant; ANSEP reduction; and the reduction of broadband funding for school districts by $672,700. Since the funding for these items are no longer in the department's budget, they cannot be added back without Legislative action which at the earliest would be for FY2018. Considering the State of Alaska's current fiscal crisis, it's predicted that it'll be at least a few years before any new appropriations are added back into the department's budget. Despite this, the department will look into Public Works' recommendations of areas for alternative future savings and consider them when preparing the department's FY2018 budget.

Recommendation 10.3.1
Update the Alaska's school bus driver training instructor's manual, post the updated manual on DEED's website, and ensure the additional collection of data involving accidents with no injuries and accidents where the bus driver is at fault. (Tier 1)

The department does not concur with recommendation 10.3.1. While the department agrees with updating the driver training manual and placing the updated manual on the department's website; and while the department agrees with and does collect accident data, the finding includes misinformation around that terminology "driver at fault" that precludes the department from agreeing with this recommendation.

The department has historically collected school bus accident data and has provided the data upon request. The department has historically summarized the accident data into the following categories: fatalities, passengers with serious injuries, passengers with minor injuries, accidents with no injuries, and total number of accidents; below is a table that provides the data for those categories from FY2004-FY2015.

SCHOOL DISTRICT BUS ACCIDENT REPORT SUMMARY 2004-15

Fiscal Year	Fatalities	Passengers w/Serious Injuries	Passengers w/Minor Injuries	Accidents with no Injuries	Total Number of Accidents
2004	0	0	8	133	141
2005	0	0	42	89	102
2006	0	0	22	68	78
2007	0	1	12	69	76
2008	0	0	3	56	57
2009	0	2	11	200	207
2010	0	0	12	147	159
2011	0	0	1	170	171
2012	0	1	18	148	167
2013	0	0	16	126	142
2014	0	0	11	132	143
2015	0	0	11	126	137

The department's accident form does not collect data on a category titled "driver at fault" and to include such a category would require individuals with the district to make unqualified subjective evaluations as to who was at fault. The School Bus Accident Report does include information on whether a citation was issued, but that does not indicate who was at fault. The department will continue, as in the past, to review the accident data and compile the data for evaluation and reporting.

Furthermore, the recommendation includes a list of out-of-date sections in the Alaska School Bus Driver Training Instructor's manual, such as the Smooth Starts and Stops, which focuses on the use of standard transmissions. Since there are still standard transmission buses in some bus fleets the section on Smooth Starts and Stops would need to be retained at least until there are no more standard transmission buses in any fleet. The department will need to further evaluate whether the list of out-of-date sections needs to be revised or not. As stated earlier the department may not find it necessary to revise every section on the list.

Finally, the recommendation provides an estimate of $8,000 for the contracting of the updates to the manual. Without the basis for the $8,000 estimate, the department is unsure of the specific dollar amount needed for these updates. The last contract the department entered into around pupil transportation consulting was for $30,000.

Recommendation 10.4.1

Ensure that all DEED staff working with school district transportation services develop a plan to implement recommendations to reduce school district transportation costs. (Tier 1)

The department agrees with the intent of recommendation 10.4.1 to continue to monitor and investigate the pupil transportation program for cost efficiencies and to look for additional avenues that could lower costs.

The department and districts continue to work towards holding back cost increases. The department and Alaska's five largest districts have committed to presenting Alaska as a desirable market by providing concurrent bid periods and contracts from one district to the next in order to encourage more vendors and competition. Progress has been made on this front.

It should also be noted that the pupil transportation program funding is distributed to districts as a formula-based grant. The formula multiplies a per pupil cost established in statute by the number of average daily membership in the brick and mortar schools within a district. The pupil transportation grant funding is distributed to the districts in three annual payments. While implementing efficiencies for lower pupil transportation costs is the overall goal, implementing any one recommendation will not change the annual appropriation for pupil transportation.

Finally, the recommendation states that: "... there are significant potential savings to be realized through implementation of the study's recommendations." While the department has implemented the JSK Transportation Consulting LLC study through regulation, and the Request for Proposal (RFP) process where applicable, no data has been provided, nor have districts concurred that significant potential savings are available. Significant savings in pupil transportation will effect service levels.

Recommendation 10.5.1

Establish a program evaluation and accountability function within DEED to conduct the research and evaluations necessary to make data-driven decisions. (Tier 1)

The department concurs with recommendation 10.5.1, but also recognizes the current state fiscal situation and that additional resources will be very limited in future years to implement this recommendation. The importance of program evaluation will be sought within the operation through measurable outcomes. Both quantitative and qualitative data may be necessary to assess the efforts being made. However, with hiring restrictions put into place half way through FY2016, positions remaining vacated since October 2015, and the elimination of existing positions (held by persons currently employed and now laid off) due to budgetary reductions for FY2017, it is difficult at this date to plan for any hire into a none existing position. Funds would need to be reallocated from elsewhere in the department's operations. Otherwise, an existing employee with the necessary background and experience would need to be available to do this work leaving that position with duties and responsibilities unfilled.

Recommendation 10.7.1

Continue strategic planning to revise the mission and core services of the Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums so they align with and support DEED's mission, and develop more useful performance measures to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of all three units. (Tier 1)

The department concurs with recommendation 10.7.1. The Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums (LAM) will continue its strategic planning work, including establishing useful performance measures and will integrate the long range planning document developed by the museum in conjunction with the recently and successfully completed American Alliance of

Museums (AAM) reaccreditation. In addition, LAM will continue their work to improve internal coordination.

Recommendation 10.7.2
Use the Curatorial Board to provide guidance and direction to sections of the Library, Archives, and Museum division. (Tier 1)

The department concurs with recommendation 10.7.2. The Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums plans to continue to use the Curatorial Board to implement guidance and strategic direction.

Recommendation 10.10.1
Work with the legislature and State Board of Education to enable facility rentals at the new Library, Archives, and Museum building. (Tier 1)

The department concurs with recommendation 10.10.1. The department will work with the legislature and the State Board of Education & Early Development (SBOE) to pursue statutory changes to enable the Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums (LAM) to charge for a broad spectrum of services. In addition, LAM has submitted draft regulations to the SBOE that will allow them to take in rental fees for the use of the Andrew P Kashevaroff State Library, Archives, and Museum facility as well as the Sheldon Jackson Museum. The SBOE will consider opening a period of public comment on these regulations at their September 2016 meeting. The department also concurs that at least one additional part-time FTE would be needed at LAM to assist with facility rentals, to establish an enterprise zone, and to become more self-supporting without help from the legislature.

Recommendation 10.11.1
Strengthen the coordination of LAM services with the Division of Teaching and Learning. (Tier 1)

The department concurs with recommendation 10.11.1. The Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums (LAM) services hopes to be able to create at least a part-time educational coordinator to work with the Division of Teaching and Learning Support, so that LAM resources can be more fully utilized by department staff and by extension, students statewide. In addition, LAM will consider more fully advertising its value to the overall department and public education; including their contributions to public education such as having an e-rate specialist contractor who assists school districts upon request in applying for e-rate discounts; offering artist-in-residence programs; amongst many others.

Recommendation 10.13.1
Update DEED's Chart of Accounts to reflect 21st century technology and technology-related services. (Tier 2)

The department does not concur with recommendation 10.13.1. The recommendation acknowledges that the department's Chart of Accounts was developed to establish a minimum reporting standard for Alaska schools. The current edition of the Chart of Accounts does

establish a minimum reporting standard. The minimum reporting standard established provides the department with the necessary required reporting elements for federal and state reporting.

The department utilizes the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) Financial Accounting for Local and State School Systems model chart of accounts as a reference and guide along with the requirements of state statutes and regulations when updates are made to the department's Chart of Accounts. The 2009 and 2014 updates to the NCES model chart of accounts were generally optional codes that incorporated changes resulting from the issuance of GASB Statements. In terms of technology, Alaska has expenditure object codes parallel to the required NCES expenditure object codes. While NCES has established a number of additional optional expenditure and asset reporting codes specific to technology, these codes are not required for federal reporting and have not been incorporated into the department's Chart of Accounts.

It should be noted that there is a cost associated with making updates to the department's Chart of Accounts. An update to the Chart of Accounts requires the allocation of staff time and requires a regulatory review with the update receiving a Department of Law review and a review by the State Board of Education & Early Development along with advertised public comment periods before the updated Chart of Accounts can be implemented.

Recommendation 10.13.2
Increase staff training on the DEED Chart of Accounts to create more efficient accounting processes. (Tier 2)

The department concurs with the intent of recommendation 10.13.2. This recommendation addresses providing training to school business officials and department staff on the department's Chart of Accounts. The department will continue its current practice of providing training to the school districts on the chart of accounts through the Alaska Association of School Business Officials (ALASBO) annual conference and through business manager trainings held at the department; as well as continue to provide districts and department staff with answers on questions regarding the department's Chart of Accounts. When the next update to the Chart of Accounts occurs the department, in keeping with current practice, will provide training to school districts and department staff on the updates.

Recommendation 10.15.1
Update the MEHS strategic plan to include data-driven, specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, timely (SMART) goals and ensure that the plan is well communicated to stakeholders, posted on the MEHS website, tied to a specific budget, monitored regularly, and reported to the State Board. (Tier 1)

The department concurs with recommendation 10.15.1. As noted in the report, the department is working on updating MEHS's strategic plan. The department will review this plan further to see if it will be feasible to include SMART goals and ensure that the strategic plan is communicated to stakeholders, as well as posted on MEHS' website. The department will also review the plan in order to tie it to a specific budget, develop a schedule to ensure the plan is monitored on a

more regularly basis, as well as ensure the State Board of Education & Early Development receives a report on the plan.

Recommendation 10.15.2
Administer an anonymous needs assessment to MEHS staff to ensure that their voices are heard in making recommendations for school improvement. (Tier 1)

The department concurs with recommendation 10.15.2. In conjunction with MEHS, the department and the State Board of Education & Early Development will work on developing an anonymous needs assessment survey that could be given to MEHS staff on a regularly basis in order to seek input on recommendations for school improvement.

Recommendation 10.15.3
Establish a best practice database on the MEHS website to share best practices statewide. (Tier 2)

The department concurs with recommendation 10.15.3. The department and MEHS will work to add a section to MEHS' website where best practices can be posted and the link will be shared with district's across the state so others can have access to this information.

Recommendation 10.16.1
Place a higher priority on the acceptance of special needs students at MEHS and ensure that the website and all applications state explicitly that special needs students are eligible to apply, and consider adopting a goal in the new strategic plan geared to enhancing offerings and opportunities for these students. (Tier 1)

The department does not concur with recommendation 10.16.1. MEHS is already open to students with special needs of all kinds. By noting on MEHS' application the fact that the campus is not ADA compliant indicates that MEHS is not trying to discourage anyone from applying, but forewarning them of this. If a student with special needs is accepted and enrolled in MEHS, then more immediate action would need to occur to make MEHS' campus ADA compliant. However, until that time, or when the legislature opts to appropriate funding to bring the campus into ADA compliance, MEHS will continue to operate as they are. With that said, the department and MEHS will review the application to see about making adjustments to explicitly state that students with special needs are eligible to apply.

Recommendation 10.17.1
Revise the MEHS admissions rating sheet to include specific point ranges with criteria for each of the factors for acceptance to the school. (Tier 1)

The department concurs with recommendation 10.17.1 and will review the admissions rating to include specific point ranges with criteria for each of the factors for acceptance into MEHS and will take the review teams recommendations on areas to add more weight to into consideration.

Recommendation 10.18.1
Establish a process for developing and adopting, a specific plan for shared services between Mt. Edgecumbe High School and Sitka School District, and begin to implement that plan. (Tier 2)

The department concurs with the intent of recommendation 10.18.1, and while MEHS and Sitka School District (SSD) can work together to develop and adopt a plan for shared services, there are a lot of unknowns as to when and how this will be accomplished. For instance, with both schools on different time schedules, finding times to share services may be limited. Furthermore, it is unclear how two schools with full classes, due to decreased revenues, can share students to result in smaller class sizes. With that said, the department will work with MEHS and SSD about the possibility of developing a plan.

Recommendation 10.19.1
Cease expenditures on the planned MEHS aquatics center. (Tier 1)

The department does not concur with recommendation 10.19.1. As noted, implementation of this recommendation would require voter approval since this project is funded mostly with general obligation bonds. Furthermore, the department has worked with the Governor and the Office of Management and Budget over the past four years regarding this project and seeking guidance on whether this project should move forward or not. The department has been directed to move forward with the MEHS aquatic center construction, construction contracts have been awarded, and there was a ground breaking ceremony on May 1, 2016.

Recommendation 10.20.1
Consider changing the governance structure of MEHS to a quasi-corporation structure in order to enhance its efficiency and effectiveness. (Tier 1)

The department does not concur with recommendation 10.20.1. The department does not see the benefits of changing MEHS' governance structure. In addition, without conducting extensive research, it appears that State of Alaska "quasi-corporations" are established and have that title because they have an independent source of revenue other than State of Alaska general fund. By definition, MEHS is a public school and funded entirely by public dollars.

Sincerely,

Dr. Michael Johnson
Commissioner

This page intentionally left blank.

APPENDIX G: ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

September 21, 2016

Alaska State Legislature
Legislative Budget and Audit Committee
Division of Legislative Audit
P.O. Box 113300
Juneau, AK 99811-3300

Members of the Legislative Budget and Audit Committee:

We have reviewed the Department of Education and Early Development's (DEED) response to the DEED performance review. Below are the Public Works LLC review team's additional comments concerning recommendations with which DEED disagrees.

Recommendation 1.1.1: Alter the current governance structure of DEED to ensure role clarity and establish a clear reporting structure for the commissioner of education position.

We have reviewed DEED's response and nothing in the response persuaded us to revise the recommendation. Our team recognizes that the current structure is defined in AS 14.07.085; however, the RFP required our team to determine whether there are statutory, regulatory, budgetary, or other restrictions impeding the department. Our analyses have determined that the current governance structure is impeding the department's effectiveness.

Recommendation 3.1.4: Continue to work with the Department of Administration (DOA) to address the state government hiring and personnel challenges, and leverage private funding to help address salary challenges.

We have reviewed DEED's response and nothing in the response persuaded us to revise the recommendation. Many of the challenges DEED faces in recruiting and retaining top-level talent are rooted in burdensome and time-consuming hiring processes established in state government personnel policies and regulations.

Recommendation 3.5.2: Coordinate the development of, and provide support for, a base curriculum with aligned instructional resources across a select set of academic contents.

We have reviewed DEED's response and nothing in the response persuaded us to revise the recommendation. As the state education agency, DEED should take the lead role in this effort with the assistance of its partners and volunteer districts that have strong base curricula. District staff expressed overwhelming support for this recommendation on the condition that the supported curriculum is voluntary, and allows for local variations and modifications to meet their students' and communities' needs. The implementation of this recommendation should ultimately produce savings for the state of Alaska. Further, it would assist smaller districts for which the cost of developing a strong curriculum is cost prohibitive.

Recommendation 3.6.1: Repeal AS 14.17.520 requiring school districts to spend at least 70 percent of their operating funds on instruction.

We have reviewed DEED's response and nothing in the response persuaded us to revise the recommendation. We recognize the department cannot repeal statues. We have noted that this recommendation would require legislative action.

Recommendation 6.3.1: Serve as a change agent or catalyst for the establishment of statewide strategies and services for increasing the wireless, wide area network, and broadband internet connectivity services to school districts.

We have reviewed DEED's response and nothing in the response persuaded us to revise the recommendation.

Recommendation 6.9.1: Continue to complete the assessment of the political, cost, and technical issues related to providing services such as Microsoft 365 for Education to district and schools in Alaska.

We have reviewed DEED's response, and nothing in the response persuaded us to revise the recommendation. We reiterate that there is no fiscal impact beyond what has been budgeted for to continue the ongoing assessment as

recommended; however, if DEED does opt to offer volume savings for additional services that could be offered to schools, the recommendation should yield long-term savings and efficiencies for the state.

Recommendation 7.1.1: Eliminate duplication of work processes by the Professional Teaching Practices Commission (PTPC) and university teacher preparation programs, and by the PTPC and DEED.

We have reviewed DEED's response and nothing in the response persuaded us to revise the recommendation. As noted in the report, there are currently inefficiencies and duplication of effort in the management of educator licensing responsibilities.

Recommendation 7.1.2: Amend AS 14.20.370-510 Professional Teaching Practices Act to consolidate the work of the Professional Teaching Practices Commission in to the Teacher Certification Office's work.

We have reviewed DEED's response and nothing in the response persuaded us to revise the recommendation. DEED addresses educator misconduct through a system that is unnecessarily expensive and elaborate given the relatively small number of educators and the significant fiscal challenges of the state.

Recommendation 7.1.3: Amend AS 14.20.370-510 such that the PTPC is advisory to the State Board of Education, rather than an entity that renders final administrative decisions in matters of certificate sanctions for educator misconduct.

We have reviewed DEED's response, and nothing in the response warrants revision to the recommendation. DEED's current process for sanctioning certificates bypasses the entity charged with setting standards for educator preparation, practice, and conduct. This creates an unnecessary procedural step, presumes that the entity making the decision is not objective, and in the case of Alaska PTPC and DEED, creates duplication of effort across multiple agencies.

Recommendation 8.3.1: Initiate steps to make the capital funding application process less cumbersome and the scoring more straightforward.

We have reviewed DEED's response and nothing in the response persuaded us to revise the recommendation. We are delighted to note that DEED will consider making our suggested changes.

Recommendation 9.1.1: Eliminate or modify proposed budget reductions.

We have reviewed DEED's response and nothing in the response persuaded us to revise the recommendation. It was our task to "evaluate the appropriateness of the budget reductions proposed under AS 44.66.020(c)." The information contained in the final report was accurate at the time the report was submitted. Although the proposed reductions have been made final for the FY 2017 DEED budget, our team suggests that the information in the finding may be used to strengthen the decision-making process for future budget decisions.

Recommendation 10.3.1: Update the Alaska's school bus driver training instructor's manual, post the updated manual on the DEED's website, and ensure the additional collection of data involving accidents with no injuries and accidents where the bus driver is at fault.

We have reviewed DEED's response and nothing in the response persuaded us to revise the recommendation. The driver training instructor's manual has not been updated in 16 years and is outdated. The department should continue to collect all relevant data to ensure appropriate training is provided to bus drivers based on a review of the data. DEED contends they are still using manual transmission buses. These buses are over 20 years old and should be phased out as quickly as possible for safety reasons; references to manual transmission buses should be accordingly eliminated in the training manual. We polled transportation experts and the estimated cost to revise the training manual is $8,000.

Recommendation 10.13.1: Update DEED's Chart of Accounts to reflect the 21st century technology and technology-related services.

We have reviewed DEED's response, and nothing in the response compels us to revise the recommendation. The Chart of Accounts has not been updated since 2000, and in the absence of technology codes, local districts note that they are now reporting IT purchases and expenses to DEED using a variety of accounting codes, which are unlikely to be consistent and may or may not be accurate.

publicworks
making good ideas work for the better

Recommendation 10.16.1: Place a higher priority on the acceptance of special needs students at MEHS and ensure that the website and all applications state explicitly that special needs students are eligible to apply, and consider adopting a goal in the new strategic plan gear to enhancing offerings and opportunities for these students.

We have reviewed DEED's response and nothing in the response persuaded us to revise the recommendation. The state spends $10.5 million to operate a high-performing high school; the school should explicitly welcome and accommodate ALL Alaskan students, including those with special needs.

Recommendation 10.19.1: Cease expenditures on the planned MEHS aquatics center.

We have reviewed DEED's response and nothing in the response persuaded us to revise the recommendation. Further, DEED did not in its response address the critical issue of how it will fund the estimated $1.0 million each year to maintain the pool, in light of the current fiscal crisis.

Recommendation 10.20.1: Consider changing the governance structure of MEHS to a quasi-corporation structure in order to enhance its efficiency and effectiveness.

We have reviewed DEED's response, and nothing in the response persuaded us to revise the recommendation. DEED should consider an alternate governance structure of MEHS to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization.

In summary, the Public Works review team reaffirms the findings and recommendations presented in this report.

Sincerely,

JoAnn J. Cox,
Public Works Project Director