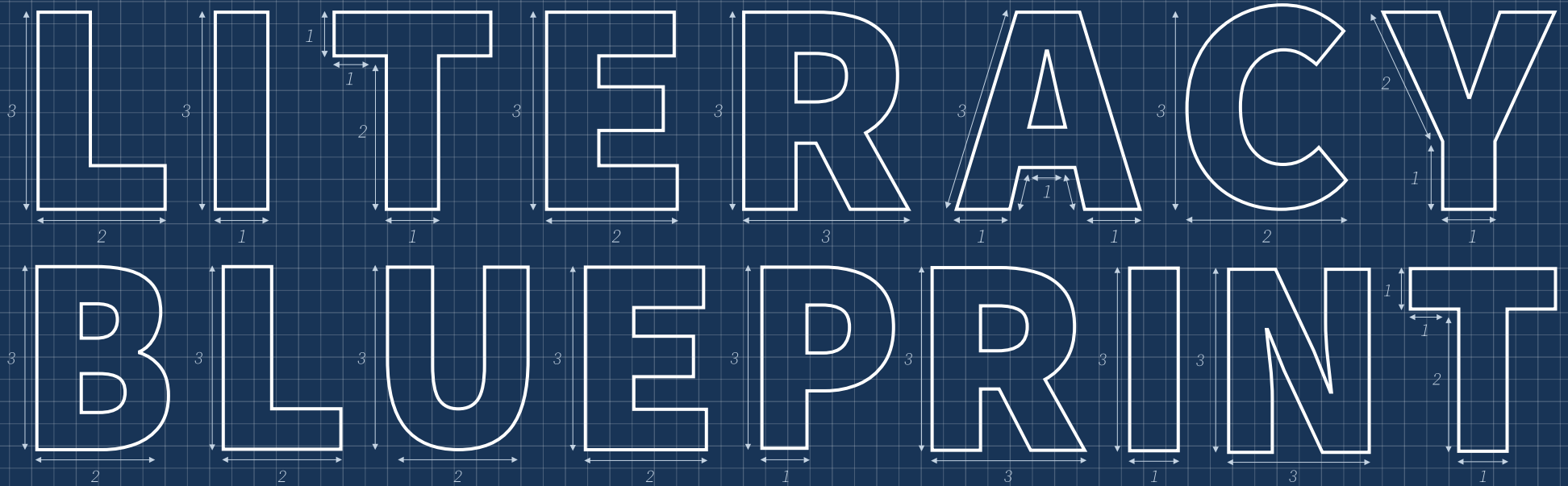


ALASKA'S



2023

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THANKS TO THE LEADERSHIP OF THE ALASKA LITERACY BLUEPRINT TEAM:

Birth to Kindergarten

Heidi Johnson, Juneau School District, *Early Education/Special Education*

Stephanie Schott, Anchorage, *Best Beginnings*

Jamie Shanley, Sealaska Heritage Institute, *Education Program Manager*

Dora Strunk, Kwinhagak Tribe, *Retired Teacher*

Kindergarten to Grade 5

Jennifer Bell, Dillingham School District, *Literacy Coach*

Joshua Gill, Bethel Yupik Immersion School, *Principal*

Danielle Hass, Sealaska Heritage Institute, *Literacy Specialist*

Shanna Johnson, Lower Yukon School District, *Director of Curriculum*

Emily Snyder, Nenana City School District, *Elementary Teacher*

Grade 6 to Graduation

Stephen Calkin, Nenana City School District, *RTI Coordinator & High School Social Studies Teacher*

Tonia Dousay, University of Alaska Anchorage, *School of Education Director*

Elizabeth Hancock, Anchorage, Alaska Native Cultural Charter School, *Middle School Language Arts Teacher*

Karen Melin, Fairbanks Northstar Borough School District, *Superintendent*

Facilitator

Marybeth Flachbart

Technical Assistance

Brittney Bailey, Alaska Department of Education & Early Development, *Education Specialist*

Hollins Emili, Alaska Department of Education & Early Development, *Education Specialist*

Kaitlyn Hall, Region 16 Comprehensive Center, *Communications Specialist*

Joel Isaak, Alaska Department of Education & Early Development, *Director of Tribal Affairs*

Susan McKenzie, Alaska Department of Education & Early Development, *Director of Innovation & Education Excellence*

Amy Jo Meiners, Region 16 Comprehensive Center, *Education Specialist*

Tracy Parker, Alaska Department of Education & Early Development, *Education Specialist*

Tamara Van Wyhe, Region 16 Comprehensive Center, *Alaska State Director*

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“

It's not an either-or conversation — we have to be culturally relevant, or we teach the science of reading research. *It's both.*

DR. TRACY WEEDEN

President & CEO, Neuhaus Education Center



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

**Department of Education
& Early Development**

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

333 Willoughby Ave., 9th Floor, SOB
P.O. Box 110500
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0500
Main: 907.465.2800
TTY/TDD: 907.465.2815
Fax: 907.465.2806

February 27, 2023

Fellow Alaskans,

Reading is an essential foundation for learning. As children’s book author Tomie dePaola said, “If you can read, you can learn anything about everything and everything about anything.” In 2016, Alaska’s Education Challenge was developed with five measurable goals. Supporting students to read at grade level by the end of third grade is our priority as our department seeks to meet the goals we established in 2016. Reading proficiency impacts our students, state, and society far beyond the end of third grade: proficiency in reading is associated with higher rates of high school graduation and college attendance, as well as lower rates of incarceration.

Our current state summative assessment results tell us that about 80% of our third-grade students are not proficient in reading. On a national scale, Alaska ranked 49th in fourth-grade reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. While the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on student achievement nationwide, our scores have consistently hovered below the national average. We know that our state is capable of transforming this trend and implementing approaches that foster sustainable improvements in reading proficiency.

Over the past two years, our staff has worked closely with partners, stakeholders, legislators, and communities to deepen our commitment to meeting Alaska’s Education Challenge. In 2021, we collaborated with Region 16 Comprehensive Center to publish *Alaska’s Reading Playbook* as a science of reading resource for educators in Alaska. We brought together 1,000 educators, community members, and leaders at our inaugural Alaska Science of Reading Symposium in April 2022 and launched our Strategic Reading Plan in May. In June 2022, the 32nd Alaska State Legislature passed the landmark Alaska Reads Act to address reading across Alaska with our earliest learners in mind. Our current collective efforts are aligned to evidence-based approaches for teaching reading in English.

There is great momentum across the state to improve reading for our students. The Alaska Literacy Blueprint tells our story: a story of who we are, where we have been, and where we are headed. Our future will demonstrate a collaborative effort that results in improved reading support so that we are able to provide an excellent education for every student every day. As Dr. Seuss wrote in *Oh, The Places You’ll Go!*, “The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you’ll go.” As proficient readers, our students will have the opportunity to go forth, know more than they ever dreamed, and shape meaningful lives for themselves and for those around them. Our students deserve our best.

In service,

Susan McKenzie, *Director of Innovation & Education Excellence*, **Heidi Teshner**, *Acting Commissioner*, and **Michael Johnson**, *Commissioner (2016–22)*

Table of *Contents*

01

Our Hope

How does *Alaska's Literacy Blueprint* align with the mission and vision of our department?

02

Our Purpose

Why a literacy blueprint? Why now?

03

Our State

What makes teaching and learning in Alaska unique?

04

Our Students

What identities do our students hold?

06

Our Strategy

What is the department doing to transform reading education statewide?

09

Our Foundation

What approaches guide our efforts?

14

Our Journey

What have we done thus far? Where are we going next?

25

Our Resources

What sources informed this blueprint? Where can you learn more?

28

Our Thanks

Who helped us on this journey?



from /ā/ to /z/

Our *Hope*

An excellent education for every student every day.

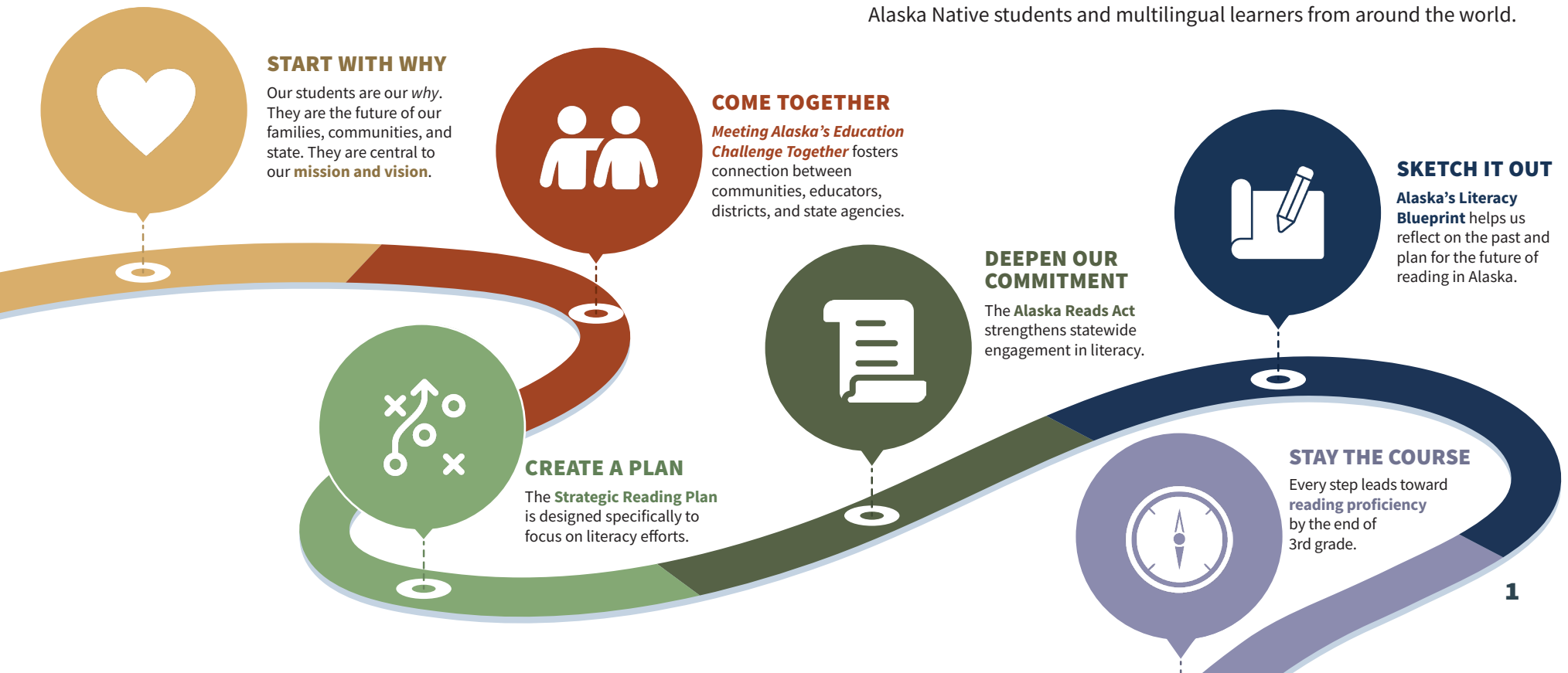
Our mission is at the heart of everything we do: an excellent education for every student every day. As we create new policies and explore new practices, we consider the impacts of our work on every single one of Alaska's 131,212 public school students.

It is the policy of this state that the purpose of education is to help ensure that all students will succeed in their education and work, shape worthwhile and satisfying lives, exemplify the best values of society, and be effective in improving the character and quality of the world around them.

In service to our mission and vision, our state and local education agencies have deepened efforts over the past decade to create school cultures and systems where students of all identities can thrive and find belonging.

As we look ahead, we know we must implement approaches to education that are culturally sustaining for Alaska Native learners. Among other domains, this means deepening connection to place, embracing cyclical models of learning and growth, and deconstructing assimilationist practices.

In this blueprint, you'll join us on a journey from where we've been to where we're going. This document is a work in progress: we'll continue to make changes as we explore instructional practices that better serve Alaska Native students and multilingual learners from around the world.



Our *Purpose*

Alaska’s last literacy blueprint was written in 2011. A lot has changed in the last 12 years.

Since then, Alaska adopted new **English Language Arts** standards to reflect the advanced literacy students need to be ready for college and careers. We adopted the **Alaska Native Cultural Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools**. The State Board of Education and DEED worked with educators and community members from across the state to create **Alaska’s Education Challenge**, which placed third-grade reading proficiency as a state priority.

We created **Alaska’s Reading Playbook**, which defines the science of reading and provides strategies to teach phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. We created the **Alaska Strategic Reading Plan** based on input from partners and stakeholders. Most recently, the **Alaska Reads Act** became law.

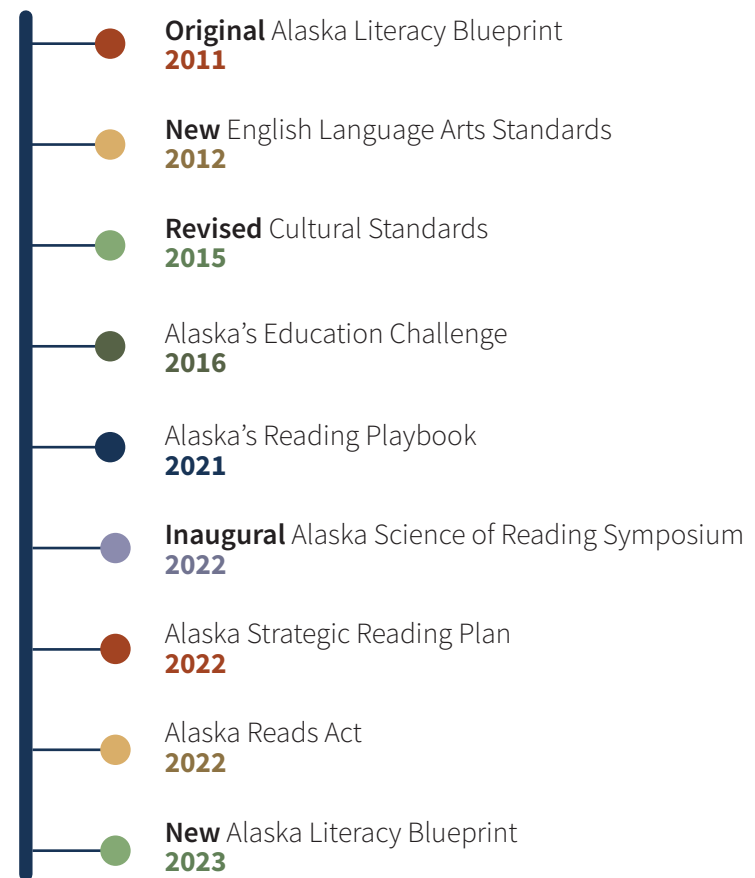
We have implemented the **Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant**, and we also have two new assessments: mCLASS by Amplify and the Alaska System of Academic Readiness (AK STAR). **mCLASS by Amplify** helps educators identify students K–3 who might be at risk for reading difficulties. **AK STAR** helps provide an accurate picture of proficiency at the end of the school year.

All of this change can get hard to track — and that’s where the blueprint comes in! This document is designed to provide partners, stakeholders, and communities with one document that summarizes our literacy efforts statewide.

Throughout the blueprint, you will find links where you can access

more information on each of our projects. We will update the blueprint to reflect our current literacy work as implementation of our literacy initiatives continues.

Timeline



Our *State*

Our classrooms and schools across the state of Alaska are situated on the customary traditional lands of Alaska's first peoples. We acknowledge and thank the generations of Alaska Native peoples from across the state for their continued work in taking care of the land and teaching the next generation of young people.

Alaska covers a landmass of 570,380 miles. Our state is more than twice as large as the next-largest state, Texas, yet according to the 2021 census, our population is less than 750,000.¹

We are home to 17 of the highest mountains in the United States. We are also home to the northernmost, easternmost, and westernmost points in the United States: Nuvuk or Point Barrow to the north, Pochnoi Point to the east, and Amatignak Island to the west. Both the land and the people of Alaska are unique.

Our students live in distinct geographic locations, on and off a road system, connected by planes, ferries, and snow machines. Mountains, rivers, oceans, islands, permafrost, and forests provide varied learning and living conditions that are unique to each ecosystem. Alaska has 21 official state languages, 20 of which are Alaska Native languages.²

Our schools are some of the most diverse in the nation. Families from around the

world come to Alaska for a range of reasons and bring with them rich backgrounds as well. Our demographics include significant percentages of children from Hispanic, Asian, African American, and Pacific Islander families.³



Our diversity is an asset. We must braid all of our strengths together to meet the needs of every student and close opportunity gaps between demographic groups.

Our *Students*

Our 131,212 public school students will become the innovators, leaders, changemakers, and Elders that guide our state North to the Future.

Their diversity is an asset in every classroom statewide. Our students' identities show up in meaningful ways throughout their education. They speak Alaska Native and world languages that underpin their cultures and influence their worldview. Our student body includes shareholders and descendants of the regional and village Alaska Native Corporations, as well as citizens and descendants of hundreds of Indigenous Nations across the land now known as the United States.

As of 2020, there were 17,760 school-age children with disabilities across Alaska.⁹ Students with disabilities experience and interact with the world in different ways than their neurotypical or physiotypical classmates; their experiences and perspectives have immense value and transformational potential.

Student Profile

RACE & ETHNICITY



As of October 1, 2022, **21%** of Alaska students identify as Alaska Native. **1%** of students identify as American Indian, **5%** as Asian, **2%** as Black, **8%** as Hispanic, **3%** as Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, **13%** as two or more races, and **47%** as white.¹⁰

LANGUAGE

More children than adults in Alaska are multilingual.¹¹ Of the 188,321 Alaskans aged 0–18:



Most of the 11.5% of Alaska youth who speak another language at home speak Alaska Native languages. In total, 40% of Alaska students classified as English learners (EL) are Alaska Native.¹⁶ According to a 2021 study from the Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest, 80% of Alaska Native EL students reported speaking a language in the Yupik family as their home language.¹⁷ Yupik languages are spoken by Indigenous peoples whose homelands are located in Chukotka (eastern Russia) and western and south-

central Alaska. They are part of the Inuit-Yupik-Unanga language family, which stretches from Siberia to Greenland.¹⁸

Among non-Alaska Native students, 24% of EL students reported Spanish as their home language, followed by Filipino or Tagalog (17%), Hmong (14%), Samoan (14%), and Russian (8%).¹⁹ Many of the languages spoken in Alaska are transparent languages, which means that most letters correspond to a single sound. Different reading strategies “are associated with (. . .) different levels of opacity.”²⁰ As a result, bilingual or multilingual students who have learned to read in their first language are attuned to the strategies that will allow them to best process print text in that language.²¹

As we continue to strengthen our evidence-based approaches to teaching reading in English, we will also examine strategies that provide support for bilingual and multilingual learners.

DISABILITY

More than 17,000 school-age children in Alaska have a disability. Disabilities can impact students’ mobility, cognition, hearing, vision, and self-care. Some disabilities have significant impacts on how children learn to read. For example, children who are deaf may use different strategies than children who are hearing to connect letters and words to meaning.²² Of the 17,760 school-age children in Alaska with a disability:²³



Autism: 1,606 or **9%** have autism. Autism affects how people perceive the world, socialize, and process stimuli.



Deaf-blindness: 7 or **0.03%** are deaf-blind. Deaf-blindness affects both hearing and vision.



Developmental delay: 1,737 or **10%** have a developmental delay. Developmental delays affect one or more areas of development.



Emotional disturbance: 725 or **4%** have an emotional disturbance. Emotional disturbance can affect mood and learning.



Hearing impairment: 151 or **1%** have a hearing impairment. Hearing impairment affects hearing and may be mild to profound.



Intellectual disability: 583 or **3%** have an intellectual disability that could affect thinking, learning, understanding, or memory.



Multiple disabilities: 625 or **4%** have multiple disabilities. These disabilities may affect learning in different ways.



Orthopedic impairment: 53 or **0.3%** have an orthopedic impairment that could affect movement.



Other health impairment: 2,676 or **15%** have a health impairment that affects the ability to learn.



Specific learning disability: 6,736 or **38%** have a specific learning disability like dyslexia or dyscalculia.



Speech or language impairment: 2,791 or **16%** have a speech or language impairment that affects communication.



Traumatic brain injury: 27 or **0.2%** have a traumatic brain injury. These injuries may be temporary or permanent.



Visual impairment: 43 or **0.25%** have a visual impairment. Visual impairments affect vision and may be partial to severe.

Every child’s individual experience of their disability will be unique. Some students with disabilities may find learning to read easier than it is for their non-disabled peers, while others may need strong systems of supports. But the earlier the support, the better — early intervention is key, especially for students with specific learning disabilities like dyslexia.²⁴

Our *Strategy*

Our strategic reading plan encompasses all efforts to achieve the promise of supporting all students to read at grade level by the end of third grade.

In fall 2021, the Division of Innovation & Education Excellence at DEED led a survey of educators across the state. Participants provided input on their needs for curriculum and assessment, instruction and intervention, and professional development.

The Strategic Reading Plan is based on input provided by stakeholders and includes the new programs outlined in the Alaska Reads Act.

READING PLAN

Our **Strategic Reading Plan** is a living document. We evaluate and adapt our plan often to address ongoing literacy needs across the state. The plan includes six strategic components, all designed to provide support to schools so that all students read at grade level by the end of third grade:

- 1 Strategy 1: Professional Development**, including webinar series, in-person courses, and the symposium
- 2 Strategy 2: Evidence-Based Materials**, including *Alaska's Reading Playbook* and an ELA curriculum adoption initiative
- 3 Strategy 3: Early Learning**, including the implementation of the Reads Act Early Education Grant and Teaching Strategies Gold

4

Strategy 4: Frameworks for Success, including professional learning communities and a state-adopted literacy screener

5

Strategy 5: Science of Reading Resources, Data, and Communication, including launching a reading resources page

6

Strategy 6: Teacher Preparation, including supporting Alaska Reads Act professional learning requirements

Collectively, these strategies integrate our efforts to meet the promises of Alaska's Education Challenge.

EARLY LEARNING

Early Learning is a part of the Alaska Reads Act and is the **third strategy** of our Strategic Reading Plan. We know from reading research that reading begins at birth²⁵ and that the earlier we intervene, the greater the likelihood of success.²⁶

We believe that we will better prepare more students for kindergarten by increasing statewide, high-quality early learning opportunities for children birth to age 5.

DEED continues to work with **Head Start** and pre-elementary programs to train staff and implement the Teaching Strategies (TS) Gold Assessment, which is an observation-based whole child assessment that includes specific literacy dimensions.

READING INTERVENTION

Prior to the passage of the Alaska Reads Act, DEED recognized the need to have knowledgeable and skilled teachers of reading. The Alaska Reads Act reaffirms our commitment to providing the reading instruction each student needs to read at grade level by the end of grade 3:

“Each school district shall offer **intensive reading intervention services** to students in grades kindergarten through three who exhibit a reading deficiency to assist students in achieving reading proficiency at or above grade level by the end of grade three.”²⁷

Our multipronged approach to reading intervention, detailed below, is designed to ensure sustaining systemic supports.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

When educators have the tools they need to implement evidence-based, culturally responsive approaches to reading intervention in their classrooms, opportunity gaps close. We know that intensive reading intervention services take experience — and we’re committed to providing paraeducators, teachers, and building and district leaders with the training they need to support all students through professional development, the **first strategy** of our Strategic Reading Plan.

We collaborate with partners such as Region 16 Comprehensive Center (R16CC), Alaska’s Educational Resource Center (SERRC), the Alaska Staff Development Network (ASDN), and the Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB) to deliver extensive professional development and ongoing support.

Ongoing professional learning opportunities and initiatives include:





- *The Alaska’s Reading Playbook* for Teachers and *Alaska’s Reading*

Playbook for School and District Leaders training series, offered by DEED and R16CC through aklearns.org

- LETRS cohorts for K–5 teachers, administrators, and early childhood educators, sponsored by DEED and R16CC
- A Beyond the Bell Assessment & Data Literacy Professional Learning Series, offered by DEED, R16CC, and NWEA through aklearns.org/beyond-the-bell/
- The Alaska Science of Reading Symposium, hosted in Anchorage in April 2022, 2023, and 2024 by DEED and R16CC

EVIDENCE-BASED MATERIALS

Comprehensive, evidence-based curricula and materials provide teachers with a blueprint for supporting students within and across grade levels. Evidence-based materials for reading intervention are the **second strategy** of our Strategic Reading Plan. They work best when paired with strategies 1 and 4. During the 2022–23 school year, DEED provided support for:

-  **Heggerty Phonemic Awareness**, the phonemic awareness curriculum used by more than half of all districts nationwide
-  **Phonics for Reading**, an explicit phonics intervention program from national expert Dr. Anita Archer and Curriculum Associates
-  **CORE Reading Sourcebook** and **CORE Multiple Measures**, which bridge the gap between research and practice
-  **UFLI Foundation: SOR Teacher Resource Book**, an explicit, systematic, core instructional program developed by teachers, for teachers, with teachers

DEED anticipates collaborating further with districts to review, create, and implement identified reading intervention materials based on the Science of Reading, as included in the Alaska Reads Act.

FRAMEWORKS FOR SUCCESS

Highly trained teachers using evidence-based curricula may still struggle to sustain success without enduring systems of supports in place. We have created an academic support team to help the local districts we serve — and our own agency — to build these systems. Frameworks for success are the **fourth strategy** of our Strategic Reading Plan.

Our team, including our partners at R16CC and Academic Development Institute, work to support schools and districts in effectively implementing frameworks for success. These frameworks include Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs).

DEED has ensured cross-training for school improvement specialists and literacy coaches. We will develop frameworks for a Reads Act Virtual Education Consortium and a Department Reading Program during the 2023–24 school year.

RESOURCES, DATA, AND COMMUNICATIONS

Resources and reports do little to change practice or improve understanding when they are not shared. The DEED team has established a communication system including evidence-based reading data reports, feedback, and resources. Together, they comprise the **fifth strategy** of our Strategic Reading Plan.

Our team launched a monthly reading newsletter in 2022. The newsletter reaches subscribers across Alaska and delivers data, spotlights schools, and highlights high-leverage resources. We also launched the **Reading Resources** webpage and updated content for **AKLearns.org**.

We hope that educators will draw on the resources and implementation data to provide targeted, effective reading instruction to students.

TEACHER PREPARATION

The **sixth and final strategy** in our Strategic Reading Plan addresses teacher preparation. DEED and partners will provide learning opportunities for both pre-service and in-service teachers and administrators as we move toward requiring proficiency in Science of Reading practices.

Our team is working closely with Alaska universities to provide training in the Science of Reading for pre-service educators. This means that new teachers will have the training they need to deliver evidence-based reading instruction from their first day in the classroom. We're also working with partners to create a reading endorsement option for teachers and a Tiered Pathways for Reads Act K–3 Teacher Training.

We are committed to providing multiple pathways for teachers to increase their preparation for and proficiency in leading evidence-based reading instruction.



Our *Foundation*

Today, we base our efforts to transform student outcomes in reading in the Science of Reading, an ongoing field of study that examines the last 50 years of research²⁸ to determine the most effective way to teach reading.

This research-based approach includes explicit, systematic instruction in phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.



Phonological awareness is the ability to hear and manipulate the sound structure of language at the word, syllable, and phoneme levels.



Phonics is the matching of spoken sounds to written letters and is key to decoding new words.



Fluency is the ability to read accurately, with expression, at a rate that allows for understanding.



Vocabulary is all the words a person knows or uses. It refers to the words a person must understand to be able to communicate effectively.



Comprehension is the ability to derive meaning from text. It is an outcome of the abilities to decode and understand language.

These five strands of evidence-based reading instruction are woven together to facilitate skilled reading.

The Science of Reading in Alaska

ALASKA'S READING PLAYBOOK

DEED and R16CC released *Alaska's Reading Playbook: A Practical Guide to Teaching Reading* in December 2021. *Alaska's Reading Playbook* provides clear, step-by-step examples of evidence-based instructional practices.

The playbook was created for and in collaboration with Alaskan educators teaching in Alaska's educational landscape. Our state's vast size, diverse student population, and rich cultures meant that we needed a playbook designed for our communities. We consulted with educators who are well-versed in Alaska Native languages and cultures to help bring forward the rich oral traditions of our Alaskan communities alongside what we have learned from research about the acquisition of literacy.

The playbook is organized by concept. There are sections for phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. In each section, readers will find a synopsis of research on the topic and instructional strategies appropriate for prekindergarten through grade five. The playbook includes links to video demonstrations of best

practices in action, as well as an extensive reference section.

The digital playbook and related resources are available at aklearns.org and education.alaska.gov/Alaska-Reading-Resources.

LITERACY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

Early childhood educators can implement many of the strategies outlined in the playbook in their classrooms — in fact, teachers in preschool or pre-kindergarten programs can put in place practices that will support students on their pathway to reading proficiency.

We know that the early literacy phase begins at birth.²⁹ The years before formal schooling play a critical role in laying the foundation for literacy. Communication, Language, and Literacy is one of five domains in the **Alaska Early Learning Guidelines**. Goal 51, “Children demonstrate appreciation and enjoyment of reading,”³⁰ reflects our hope that our youngest learners will begin to develop the skills they need to become thriving readers in early childhood. The guidelines include benchmarks that learners may be able to meet at a given age — baby, mobile baby, toddler, preschooler — as well as activities and supports that families and communities can provide to support their growth and development. For example:



Babies (0–9 months) may explore physical features of a book and imitate sounds when looking at the words in a book. Families can practice and play with words and provide books at baby’s level so they can access and look at books.³¹



Mobile babies (9–18 months) may use “book babble” when holding up a book to mimic the sound of reading. Families can read and re-read their mobile baby’s preferred texts with them.³²



Toddlers (18–36 months) may begin to understand that print represents words and begin to read text. Families can select books that are connected to the toddler’s life and help the child make those connections.³³



Preschoolers (36–60+ months) may recognize and name at least half of the letters in the alphabet, including the letters in their own name. Families can add books and print-rich materials to all play areas.³⁴

The examples in this section are just a few ways in which learners and their families can engage in reading from ages 0–5. For more, see pages 40, 71, 110, and 165–166 of the Alaska Early Learning Guidelines. Visit alaskaelg.org to learn more about the guidelines.

DEED works with a broad range of committed partners and stakeholders to ensure families, communities, and early childhood educators statewide have the knowledge and skills they need to help children get ready to read.

Stages of Development

Both language comprehension and word recognition are key in early childhood and primary classrooms. We honor the rich language our students bring to the classroom and provide them the orthography of English. We use Ehri’s Stages of Development to explain the complex process of acquiring sound-symbol correspondences.

Sound-symbol correspondences are the relationships between letters or letter combinations (graphemes) and sounds (phonemes). The number of letters and sounds varies from language to language. For example, English has 26 letters and 44 sounds. Linguists call English an opaque language, because many letters correspond to more than one sound.³⁵

EHRI'S PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT

Linnea Ehri's first article on literacy acquisition was published in 1969, the year before she earned her Doctorate in Educational Psychology. Nearly five decades later, Ehri has written more than 160 publications on reading, spelling, and instructional practices. Her four phases of development³⁶ build on decades of research on beginning readers:

- **The pre-alphabetic phase.** Most children remain in the pre-alphabetic phase from birth to age 3 or 4. They may recognize logos or symbols³⁷ as they begin to make meaningful connections between shapes and what those shapes represent.

Instruction at this phase of development should focus on phonological awareness and letter recognition.
- **The partial alphabetic phase.** Most children are in the partial alphabetic phase from prekindergarten through the start of first grade. They may recognize the first letter of a word and try to guess the rest.

Instruction at this phase of development should focus on letter knowledge, phonological awareness, and emphasizing using all letters in a word.
- **The full alphabetic phase.** Most children are in the full alphabetic phase from first grade to the start of second. They have a working knowledge of sound-symbol correspondence and should be able to apply that knowledge to decode words. Decoding may be slow.

Instruction in this phase of development should focus on segmenting and blending phonemes and on getting children to attend to every grapheme individually.
- **The automatic phase.** Most children enter the automatic phase

at the end of second grade. In this final phase of word reading development, sound-symbol correspondence has been firmly established. Children are able to immediately recognize many words in grade-level material and have the skills they need to be able to decode unfamiliar words, too.

CHALL'S STAGES OF READING DEVELOPMENT

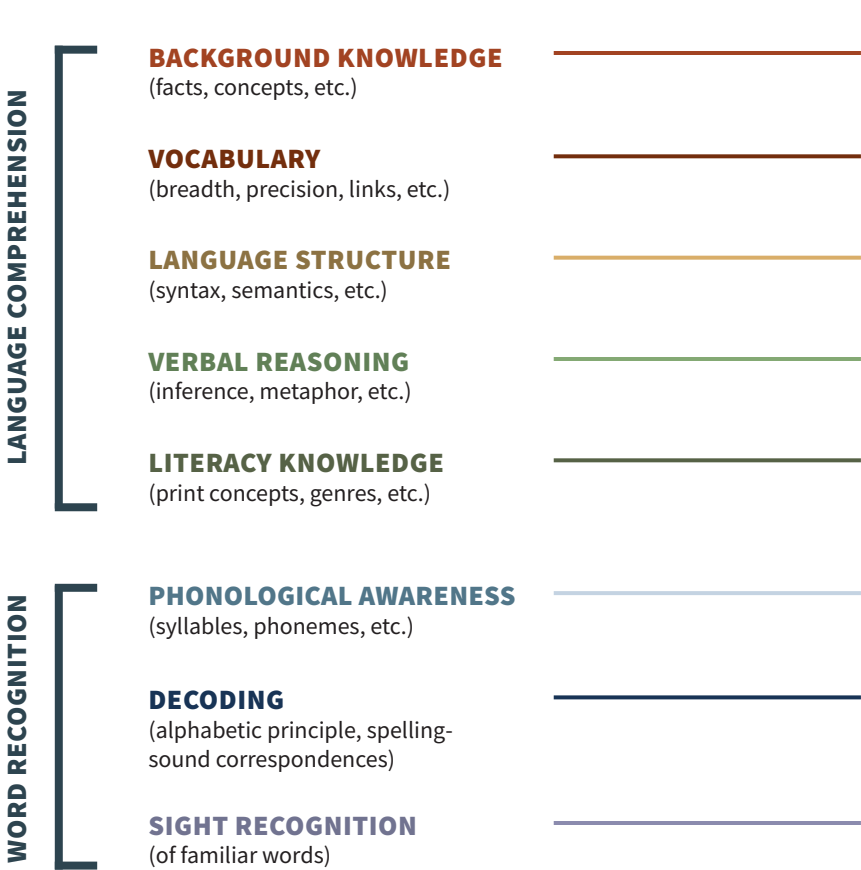
Thirty years after its publication in 1983, Jeanne Chall's *Stages of Reading Development* continues to inform how we understand the process of becoming thriving readers. Chall's stages move beyond sound-symbol correspondences to fluency and comprehension.^{38,39}

- 0 Stage 0: Prereading** · Ages 0–6, preschool and kindergarten
Children begin to accumulate the concepts and knowledge they will need to read.
- 1 Stage 1: Initial reading and decoding** · Ages 6–7, grade 1
Students learn the alphabetic principle and can read simple texts with high-frequency words.
- 2 Stage 2: Confirmation and fluency** · Ages 7–8, grades 2 and 3
Students become more fluent and can sound out and decode words in print.
- 3 Stage 3: Reading for learning the new** · Ages 9–13, grades 4–8
Students read to learn new ideas, gain new knowledge, and explore new viewpoints.
- 4 Stage 4: Multiple viewpoints** · Ages 14–17, grades 10–12
Students read widely from complex materials and genres.
- 5 Stage 5: Construction and reconstruction** · Age 18+
Readers construct their own meaning from text.

GROWING OUR UNDERSTANDING

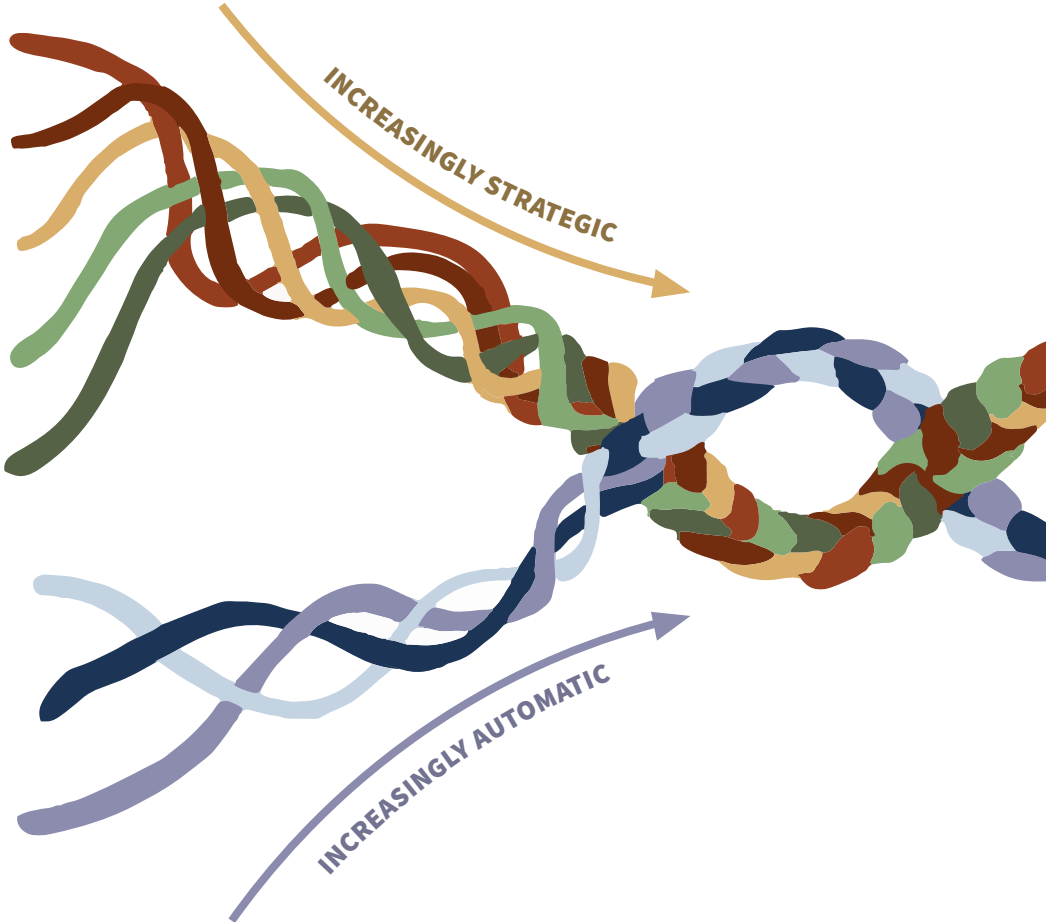
Implementing new approaches in the classroom can be every bit as challenging for teachers as reading to learn can be for students. According to reading expert Louisa Moats, Ed.D., both pre-service and in-service educators must receive training on:

- Knowing the basics of reading psychology and development
- Understanding language structure for both word recognition and language comprehension
- Applying best practices for all components of reading instruction
- Using validated, reliable, and efficient assessments to inform classroom teaching⁴⁰



All professional development and trainings offered by DEED use evidence-based theoretical frameworks, because we want educators to understand the *why* behind the concept or method of instruction. Similarly, we provide professional development on the nature of reading issues so that a teacher doesn't just know that a student is struggling to read, but rather why the student is struggling and how they might support them.

We also hope that the professional development we offer can help educators and families recognize the connections between language comprehension and word recognition. Children need to develop skills in each area simultaneously to become proficient readers. As their skills develop and weave together, they move further down the path toward skilled reading.



We often include two widely accepted tools to talk about how our students become skilled readers:

- Gough and Tunmer’s **Simple View of Reading**, which posits that decoding and language comprehension skills can predict student reading comprehension through the formula Decoding x Language Comprehension = Reading Comprehension (D x LC = RC)⁴¹
- Hollis Scarborough’s **Reading Rope**, reproduced below, which weaves language comprehension and word recognition into increasingly strategic and automatic reading⁴²

These visuals help educators, families, students, and communities understand the complexity inherent in learning to read. In fact, a 20’ version of Scarborough’s Reading Rope greeted attendees at the inaugural Alaska Science of Reading Symposium.

The Alaska Science of Reading Symposium

More than 1,000 educators, administrators, school board members, legislators, and community members attended the first Alaska Science of Reading Symposium in April 2022.

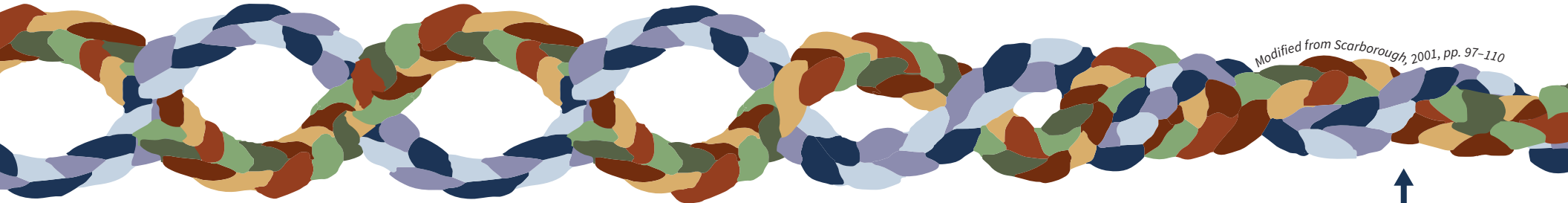
National experts in the Science of Reading presented on the best practices for transforming reading across the country, and local leaders shared the strategies moving the needle on student outcomes in their classrooms.

Educators left the 2022 symposium with evidence-based strategies and resources designed to meet the needs of students in their schools, and in 2023, they were ready to continue to grow their practice in service to our students — the 1,000 in-person seats for the 2023 symposium were filled less than three weeks after registration opened.

The symposium is one of hundreds of high-quality professional learning opportunities available for educators in Alaska. DEED and our partners publish events and opportunities on aklearns.org.

WHAT NEXT?

Our priority is to expand our understanding of the Science of Reading as applied to world and Native languages. We recognize that studies have often excluded Alaska Native students. Where possible, we have pulled from reading research conducted with Alaskan students or student populations who most closely mirror our own.^{43,44}



SKILLED READING
Fluent execution and coordination
of word recognition and
text comprehension.

Our *Journey*

Our children are our future — and our past, current, and future efforts have the potential to change the course of their lives.

Over the past decade, legislators, Tribal leaders, DEED staff, educators, and community members collaborated to create policies and a vision for literacy instruction in Alaska. These collective efforts culminated in the Alaska Reads Act, signed into law in summer 2022, and in this document, the 2023 edition of *Alaska's Literacy Blueprint*.

Prior Literacy Efforts

In creating the blueprint, we considered prior literacy efforts that shaped our journey from 2010–2019, including Alaska's Education Challenge and our updated cultural and English Language Arts standards.

ALASKA'S EDUCATION CHALLENGE

In September 2016, the State Board of Education and Early Development established five measurable goals aimed at improving public education for all students in Alaska. This work was reaffirmed in Governor Bill Walker's 2017 State of the State address, where he spoke of the need to improve public education in Alaska.⁴⁵

Governor Walker's comments launched an effort to ensure every student statewide has an equitable opportunity to learn and succeed. Regional, state, and local education agencies have implemented responsive,

innovative programs and practices designed to close opportunity gaps and increase graduation rates.

We created the **Meeting Alaska's Education Challenge Together** strategic plan to reaffirm the department's shared commitment to our mission: *An excellent education for every student every day*. The plan proposed five measurable goals:



Support all students to **read at grade level** by the end of third grade



Increase career, technical, and culturally relevant education to **meet student** and **workforce needs**



Close the achievement gap by ensuring **equitable educational rigor** and resources



Prepare, attract, and **retain** effective education professionals



Improve the **safety** and **well-being of students** through school partnerships with families, communities, and Tribes⁴⁶

Supporting all students to read at grade level by the end of third grade has been a focal point and key priority for DEED. *Alaska's Literacy Blueprint* is a demonstration of our commitment to make this priority a reality. Explore our strategic plan and measurable goals for improving Alaska's public education system at education.alaska.gov/akedchallenge.

ALASKA NATIVE CULTURAL STANDARDS

FOR CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE SCHOOLS

Alaska is a diverse and multilingual state. Over the years, Alaska developed **content standards** to define what students should know and be able to do as they go through school. Alaska Native educators developed **cultural standards** to provide a way for schools and communities to address the special issues that are critically important to schools in rural Alaska, particularly those serving Alaska Native communities and students. The 2015 standards build on and revise the 1998 Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools. As the authors of the 1998 standards write, cultural standards are “not intended to be inclusive, exclusive, or conclusive, and thus should be reviewed and adapted to fit local needs.”⁴⁷

These standards help Native and non-Native school and community leaders evaluate how well they are serving the educational and cultural wellbeing of their students. They are predicated on the belief that a firm grounding in the heritage language and culture indigenous to a particular place is a fundamental prerequisite for the development of culturally healthy students and communities associated with that place.

The Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools include cultural standards for students, educators, curriculum, schools, and communities. Culturally knowledgeable students are:

- Well grounded in the cultural heritage and traditions of their community
- Able to build on the knowledge and skills of the local cultural community as a foundation from which to achieve personal and academic success throughout life
- Able to actively participate in various cultural environments

- Able to engage effectively in learning activities that are based on traditional ways of knowing and learning
- Able to demonstrate an awareness and appreciation of the relationships and processes of interaction of all elements in the world around them⁴⁸

Learn more at education.alaska.gov/standards/cultural.

ALASKA ELA STANDARDS

Departments of education across more than 40 states have adopted the Common Core State Standards since their publication in 2010.⁴⁹ DEED recognized that our educational ecosystem’s defining characteristics render a universal approach to standards inadequate for our students. Although a universal approach wasn’t the right fit for what our students needed, neither were the English Language Arts (ELA) standards we had in place.

We began a thorough review of our English Language Arts (ELA) standards in 2010. Educators, industry leaders, higher education faculty, and community members helped us take a careful look at the content and intent of our standards. They found that our previous standards lacked the clarity and rigor that our students needed.

Our **new ELA standards**, adopted in 2012 by the State Board of Education, establish a strong foundation of knowledge and skills all students need to support themselves, their families, and their communities after graduation. They were designed to better prepare all graduates for college education, technical training, and careers.

Students who are college and career ready in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language:

- Demonstrate independence
- Build strong content knowledge

- Respond to the varying demands of audience, task, purpose, and discipline
- Comprehend as well as critique
- Value evidence
- Use technology and digital media strategically and capably
- Come to understand other perspectives and cultures⁵⁰

DEED supported districts and educators through the transition to the new standards. From 2012–2015, our team helped districts move the needle from awareness to implementation. Among other initiatives, we created ELA learning targets to help districts plan (2013), developed a writing module for districts (2014), helped educators and schools align curricula to standards, and presented on the new standards everywhere we could. Alaska’s ELA standards celebrated their 10th anniversary in 2022.



Get to know our ELA standards at education.alaska.gov/standards/english-language-arts.

Current Literacy Efforts

Our current efforts have shaped our journey in the 2020s. Many of our current efforts are described in detail elsewhere in the blueprint, including the **Strategic Reading Plan** (pp. 6–8), **Alaska’s Reading Playbook** (pp. 9–10), the **Alaska Early Learning Guidelines** (p. 10), and the **Alaska Science of Reading Symposium** (p. 13). Our current efforts are accompanied by resources and professional development opportunities available at aklearns.org and education.alaska.gov/Alaska-Reading-Resources. Ultimately, all of our current work has been shaped — and will continue to be shaped — by the passage of the Alaska Reads Act.

ALASKA READS ACT

The **Alaska Reads Act (HB114)** was passed by the 32nd Alaska State Legislature and signed into law by Governor Michael Dunleavy in June 2022. The new law created four new programs within DEED:

- **An early education grant program.** This program is designed to provide resources to 4- to 5-year-old children in districts that are not adequately served by Head Start programs or other high-quality childcare. Section 14.03.410 of HB 114 states:
 - “The department shall provide training and assistance to develop and improve district-wide early education programs that comply with standards adopted by the board.”⁵¹
- **A comprehensive reading intervention program.** This program includes the adoption of a statewide screening tool designed to

identify readers whose needs are not being met with core reading instruction. All schools that receive state funding and serve students in grades K–3 are required to provide reading intervention services based in the Science of Reading. Section 14.30.765 of HB 114 states:

“Each school district shall offer intensive reading intervention services to students in grades kindergarten through three who exhibit a reading deficiency to assist students in achieving reading proficiency at or above grade level by the end of grade three.”⁵²

- **A school improvement reading program.** This program supports the lowest-performing 25% of schools statewide. Schools who are eligible for this program may voluntarily receive direct support from DEED, including coaching, training, and mentorship from DEED reading specialists. Section 14.30.770 of HB 114 states:

“The department shall establish a reading program to provide direct support for and intervention in intensive reading intervention services annually in the lowest-performing 25 percent of schools serving students in grades kindergarten through three as determined under AS 14.03.123.”⁵³

- **A virtual education consortium.** This program will provide training on the virtual education environment. This consortium is designed to create resources, tools, communication, and partnership around virtual education. Section 14.30.800 of HB 114 states:

“The department shall, in cooperation with school districts, establish a virtual education consortium for the purpose of making virtual education and professional development resources available to students and teachers in the state.”⁵⁴

The new programs of the **Alaska Reads Act**, together with the other Department efforts previously underway, are included in Alaska’s

Strategic Reading Plan. Current K–3 educators, as part of the implementation of the Alaska Reads Act, will receive ongoing required training on the implementation of evidence-based reading instruction. Learn more about the implementation of the Alaska Reads Act at education.alaska.gov/akreads.

Current Levels of Student Achievement

We have an abundance of both current and longitudinal student achievement data. We use it to measure learning and instruction and to identify areas of growth at the state, district, school, and classroom levels.

DEED created a comprehensive assessment system with input from stakeholders. Our system includes both assessments for learning and assessments of learning:⁵⁵

- **Assessments for learning** are screening and diagnostic tools that help educators and families ensure students have the supports they need to strengthen their literacy skills.
- **Assessments of learning** are summative assessments that help educators, schools, districts, and the state measure student learning over time.

In other words, assessments for learning help educators make evidence-based decisions in the classroom, whereas assessments of learning help our state make evidence-based decisions in policy and programming. We use two assessments in each category to measure progress and identify learning and opportunity gaps for students, schools, districts, and the state education agency.

OUR ASSESSMENTS

Alaska school districts are able to select from an approved list of screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring assessments. Our state outcome assessment, the Alaska System of Academic Readiness, is required for all school districts statewide. Districts that receive Title I funding are required to participate in the National Assessment of Educational Progress, if selected for the sample.

Screenings

Screenings are administered in fall, winter, and spring. By screening students several times a year, educators are able to provide targeted reading intervention early.



Screening tools are used to identify students who might be at risk for reading difficulties.



Districts may use **mClass with DIBELS 8th Edition** or other approved screening tools.



Screeners are administered in **grades K-3**. Teachers look at current scores and student growth throughout the year.



Data determine which students need intervention and assist in the selection of diagnostic information.

Diagnostic Assessments

Diagnostic assessments are administered on an as-needed basis. Educators often use the results of other assessments for and of learning — such as screening and progress monitoring — to identify the students that need diagnostic assessments.



Diagnostic assessments provide deeper evaluation of current achievement and level of need of support.



Districts may use the **Core Phonics Survey** for phonics and **the PAST Test** (available for free at thepasttest.com) for phonemic awareness, or other approved assessments.



Students who are **not scoring at or near grade level expectations** take diagnostic assessments.



Data determine the individual or small-group instruction needed to meet students' needs.

Progress Monitoring Assessments

Progress monitoring assessments help us do just that — monitor and measure student progress. These tools can also help us evaluate the impact of our practices and processes for reading intervention.



Progress monitoring measures progress toward grade-level standards and the effectiveness of intervention.



Districts may use the **Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)** to measure standards and **mClass** to monitor foundational reading skills, or other approved assessments.



All students are assessed. Students receiving intervention services are evaluated for progress toward their goals.



Data determine the efficacy of reading interventions and show whether students are on track to meet standards.

Outcome Assessments

State and national assessments help us measure the outcome of reading instruction and interventions. They also help us compare school-, district-, and state-level results to evaluate trends in student outcomes. We can disaggregate outcome data to learn how the different identities students hold — such as age, gender, and race — impact their learning and assessment.



Outcome assessments measure the effectiveness of reading instruction at the state, district, and school levels.



We use the **National Assessment of Educational Progress** and the **Alaska System of Academic Readiness (AK STAR)**.



A sample of students in **grades 4 and 8** take the national assessment. All students in **grades 3–9** take AK STAR.



Data determine the percentage of students meeting proficiency and the subgroups needing more support.

NATIONAL READING ASSESSMENT

Although every state is required to have some sort of summative measure, states are able to choose their own measure of student achievement. Unfortunately, this variability between states makes national comparisons difficult.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) was developed to help collect national data reflecting a sample of students from all 50 states. The fourth- and eighth-grade reading assessments have been administered in Alaska since 2003.⁵⁶

Many educational researchers consider NAEP the “gold standard” for assessment because of the way it is controlled and administered.

Randomly selected students in fourth and eighth grades from randomly selected schools take the NAEP reading assessment. Some states have also administered the twelfth-grade reading assessment every four years. No state in the Pacific Northwest currently administers the twelfth-grade reading assessment.

The data is then disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, special education status, and English proficiency on a national level. NAEP is sometimes called **The Nation’s Report Card**, and results are posted for various jurisdictions, including states.⁵⁷

National Pandemic Performance

National scores in reading and mathematics declined between 2019 and 2022. Although average national scores in reading dropped by three points in both grades 4 and 8 between 2019 and 2022,⁵⁸ Alaska’s scores in both grade levels remained steady.

Nevertheless, we continue to trail significantly behind the national average in both grades. In 2022, Alaska ranked 49th in the nation in fourth-grade reading and 46th in the nation in eighth-grade reading.⁵⁹

Reading Scores over the Years

The NAEP reading assessments are scored on a 0–500 scale. NAEP identifies three achievement levels for student scores: Basic, Proficient, and Advanced. A fourth, Below Basic, is used to designate scores that fall below the minimum score required for the Basic achievement level.⁶⁰

The achievement levels illustrate expectations regarding the skills students have to read and interpret both literary and informational texts.

The achievement levels are cumulative, which means that they build on one another.⁶¹

Student performance at the Advanced level, for example, includes all of the skills and knowledge at the Proficient level, just as student performance at the Proficient level includes all of the competencies of the Basic level.

FOURTH-GRADE READING

YEAR	US	AK
2022	216	204
2019	219	204
2017	221	207
2015	221	213
2013	221	209
2011	220	208
2009	220	211
2007	220	214
2005	217	211
2003	216	212

On average, fourth graders in Alaska scored in the Basic achievement level from 2003–2015. This means that at least half of Alaska students who took the NAEP assessment scored 208 points or more.

On the 2017 NAEP assessment, the average Alaska student score fell to just below the Basic achievement level.

From 2017–2022, more than half of the Alaska students who took the NAEP assessment were still developing the reading skills they needed to reach the Basic achievement level. Alaska ranked 50th in the nation in 2019 and 49th in 2022.⁶²

EIGHTH-GRADE READING

On average, eighth-grade students in Alaska scored well within the NAEP Basic achievement level from 2003–2022. This means that at least half of Alaska students who took the NAEP assessment scored

243 points or more. Both state and national scores have fallen significantly since 2013, and the ongoing impacts of the pandemic led 2022 national scores to drop below the previous low in 2005.

Eighth-grade student scores rose in Alaska in 2022 for the first time since 2009.⁶³ This small gain in average score represents a positive trend toward stronger reading skills statewide.

These scores also show that, on average, our students continue to hone and strengthen their reading skills between fourth and eighth grades.

YEAR	US	AK
2022	259	253
2019	262	252
2017	265	258
2015	264	260
2013	266	261
2011	264	261
2009	262	259
2007	261	259
2005	260	259
2003	261	256

STATE READING ASSESSMENT

While the NAEP gives us a comparison to the national average, it doesn't allow us to do much in identifying key areas of difficulty as a state. Our state reading assessment, an assessment in the Alaska System of Academic Readiness (AK STAR), helps us measure student outcomes across the state.

When communities expressed concerns that end-of-year summative assessment data was more focused on systems than students, DEED responded by partnering with NWEA to implement a balanced approach to statewide assessment in spring 2022. Our new, balanced

approach connects fall and winter interim assessments with the spring summative assessment.

Ultimately, this approach improves efficiency and cohesion and drives student outcomes by prioritizing teaching and learning. Students in grades 3–9 experience a streamlined testing experience, and districts and schools are able to leverage data immediately to enhance learning during the school year. It also provides the information that DEED needs as a state education agency to adjust and support schools.

AK STAR will serve as a benchmark for our state to measure growth going forward.

Developing Data Literacy

A robust and customized approach to professional learning accompanies the new assessment system. Our approach is designed to expand Alaska educators' assessment literacy and knowledge of strategies for data-informed decision-making and formative instructional practices.

2022 Statewide AK STAR Results

These are the only AK STAR results available at the time of publication. Results can be found at education.alaska.gov/assessments/results.

GRADE 3



79.41% of third grade students statewide meet the needs support or approaching proficiency achievement levels and 20.59% meet the proficient or advanced achievement levels in reading.

GRADE 4



73.49% of fourth grade students statewide meet the needs support or approaching proficiency achievement levels and 26.51% meet the proficient or advanced achievement levels in reading.

GRADE 5



62.54% of fifth grade students statewide meet the needs support or approaching proficiency achievement levels and 37.46% meet the proficient or advanced achievement levels in reading.

GRADE 6



61.93% of sixth grade students statewide meet the needs support or approaching proficiency achievement levels and 38.07% meet the proficient or advanced achievement levels in reading.

GRADE 7



73.51% of seventh grade students statewide meet the needs support or approaching proficiency achievement levels and 26.49% meet the proficient or advanced achievement levels in reading.

GRADE 8



70.86% of eighth grade students statewide meet the needs support or approaching proficiency achievement levels and 29.14% meet the proficient or advanced achievement levels in reading.

GRADE 9



72.30% of ninth grade students statewide meet the needs support or approaching proficiency achievement levels and 27.70% meet the proficient or advanced achievement levels in reading.



Learn more about the Alaska System of Academic Readiness (AK STAR) and view assessment results for ELA and mathematics at education.alaska.gov/assessments/akstar.

mCLASS FROM AMPLIFY

Screeners are a key tool in our quest to meet **Alaska’s Education Challenge** together. From reading research, we know that the earlier we provide literacy intervention, the greater the likelihood that students become proficient readers.⁶⁴

Screenings are an assessment for learning, which means that they help educators and families understand what students need to learn. Survey data from districts and schools identified screening assessments as a statewide need, and further guidance was codified into law in the Alaska Reads Act. In October 2022, DEED selected **mCLASS® by Amplify** as our statewide literacy screener. Districts can elect to use other early literacy screeners, as long as the assessment meets the requirements of the law. The following characteristics led us to select mCLASS:



Multiple views of mastery: mClass provides information on mastery of foundational skills, including phonemic awareness, letter recognition, decoding, and vocabulary.



Quick results: mClass takes little time to administer, which means that students don’t lose valuable learning time on assessment days.



Flexible delivery: mClass can be administered face-to-face or virtually.



Dyslexia identification: mCLASS can also be used as a screener for characteristics of dyslexia. Early identification and intervention is important for students with dyslexia.



Proven solution: **DIBELS**, now in its eighth edition, has been used successfully as a screening assessment for more than 20 years.

All Alaska districts can access mClass for free. Under the Alaska Reads Act, screening is required for grades K–3. Districts using mClass can also choose to use the screener in grades 4 and 5. Reading specialists at DEED provide district trainers with the support they need to sustain in-district professional learning. In turn, in-district trainers provide ongoing professional development to colleagues to support mClass implementation.

WIDA

Alaska has 21 official state languages — and 20 of those languages are Alaska Native languages spoken by the first peoples of our state.

Under Alaska Statutes § 44.12.310, “The English, Inupiaq, Siberian Yupik, Central Alaskan Yup’ik, Alutiiq, Unangax, Dena’ina, Deg Xinag, Holikachuk, Koyukon, Upper Kuskokwim, Gwich’in, Tanana, Upper Tanana, Tanacross, Hän, Ahtna, Eyak, Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian languages are the official languages of the State of Alaska.”⁶⁵

Our schools are home to both students whose families have lived on these lands since time immemorial and students whose families are arriving in Alaska for the first time from homelands on the other side of the globe. We want all students to be learning every day, and as part of that vision for our students, we need to monitor the progress of our ELs.

Alaska is one of 41 member states in the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium. The consortium is dedicated to the design and implementation of high standards and equitable educational opportunities for ELs. The **WIDA assessment** tells us more about our students' proficiency in English. Students receive scores in listening, reading, speaking, and writing from levels 1–6: entering, emerging, developing, expanding, bridging, and reaching.

In addition to the WIDA assessment, the consortium has K–12 standards for social and instructional communication, language arts academic development, mathematics academic development, science academic development, and social studies academic development.

2022 Statewide WIDA Results in Reading

Almost 12,000 students statewide took the WIDA assessment in 2022.

KINDER



81% of kindergarten English learners statewide scored at proficiency level 1. **6%** of learners scored at level 3, **4%** at level 4, and **7%** at level 5.

GRADE 1



28% of first grade English learners statewide scored at proficiency level 1. **35%** of learners scored at level 2, **14%** at level 3, **9%** at level 4, **10%** at level 5, and **5%** at level 6.

GRADE 2



12% of second grade English learners statewide scored at proficiency level 1. **32%** of learners scored at level 2, **23%** at level 3, **14%** at level 4, **14%** at level 5, and **5%** at level 6.

GRADE 3



22% of third grade English learners statewide scored at proficiency level 1. **30%** of learners scored at level 2, **16%** at level 3, **10%** at level 4, **12%** at level 5, and **10%** at level 6.

GRADE 4



18% of fourth grade English learners statewide scored at proficiency level 1. **21%** of learners scored at level 2, **16%** at level 3, **10%** at level 4, **23%** at level 5, and **13%** at level 6.

GRADE 5



18% of fifth grade English learners statewide scored at proficiency level 1. **24%** of learners scored at level 2, **16%** at level 3, **13%** at level 4, **16%** at level 5, and **13%** at level 6.

GRADE 6



30% of sixth grade English learners statewide scored at proficiency level 1. **27%** of learners scored at level 2, **23%** at level 3, **6%** at level 4, **8%** at level 5, and **6%** at level 6.

GRADE 7



34% of seventh grade English learners statewide scored at proficiency level 1. **29%** of learners scored at level 2, **19%** at level 3, **4%** at level 4, **7%** at level 5, and **7%** at level 6.

GRADE 8



30% of eighth grade English learners statewide scored at proficiency level 1. **31%** of learners scored at level 2, **17%** at level 3, **3%** at level 4, **9%** at level 5, and **9%** at level 6.

GRADE 9



15% of ninth grade English learners statewide scored at proficiency level 1. **30%** of learners scored at level 2, **27%** at level 3, **6%** at level 4, **13%** at level 5, and **9%** at level 6.

GRADE 10



14% of tenth grade English learners statewide scored at proficiency level 1. **31%** of learners scored at level 2, **23%** at level 3, **8%** at level 4, **14%** at level 5, and **11%** at level 6.

GRADE 11



14% of eleventh grade English learners statewide scored at proficiency level 1. 33% of learners scored at level 2, 20% at level 3, 7% at level 4, 14% at level 5, and 12% at level 6.

GRADE 12



14% of twelfth grade English learners statewide scored at proficiency level 1. 33% of learners scored at level 2, 23% at level 3, 7% at level 4, 14% at level 5, and 9% at level 6.

Learn more about WIDA scores in Alaska on our [Assessments webpage](#). For more on the assessment, visit wida.wisc.edu/.

Future Literacy Efforts

Reading has the power to set our students free to pursue the pathways to their future. As LeVar Burton says: “For me, literacy means freedom. For the individual and for society.”

Our work doesn’t end here. This blueprint focuses on the components needed to build strong foundational reading skills as part of our priority of providing all students access to reading instruction that can lead to grade-level reading by the end of third grade.

Yet third-grade proficiency isn’t where it ends. Our goal is to create skilled, lifelong readers. The research is clear: students who lack critical literacy competencies will struggle throughout their academic career and beyond.

We must equip our students with the highly developed listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills they will need to navigate their worlds both inside and outside of the classroom. We also need to prepare our students to be able use these highly developed literacy skills in a variety of contexts.

This blueprint shows how to build a strong reading foundation that allows every student to have access to boundless opportunities to explore limitless interests. The blueprint is part of our work to carry out Alaska’s Education Challenge. As we carry out the foundational efforts covered in the blueprint we are able to continue to address the priorities set out in *Meeting Alaska’s Education Challenge Together* by:

- Providing district-, school-, and educator-level support for the implementation of curriculum and reading intervention based in the Science of Reading
- Deepening and strengthening literacy efforts and strategies for early learning
- Adding components to the Strategic Reading Plan in response to student, educator, and community needs
- Developing resources that complement the Alaska Reads Act and provide clear pathways forward for districts
- Preparing, recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce of teachers who have the training they need to implement evidence-based reading instruction
- Implementing culturally sustaining practices for literacy education
- Improving the safety and wellbeing of students through school, district, and state partnerships with families, communities, and Tribes
- Increasing our catalog of evidence-based professional learning options for educators.

Together, we can create the conditions our schools and districts need to ensure an excellent education for every student every day. An excellent education will allow all students to shape worthwhile and satisfying lives for themselves and find success in their education, employment, and communities. We can’t wait to find out what all our future has in store.

Our Resources

Want to learn more about something we mentioned in the blueprint? Match the number in the text to our endnotes, below. All endnotes include the information you would need to locate the source.

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Ready to Learn More About Reading?

In so many ways, Alaska is entirely unique — but our pursuit of evidence-based, culturally sustaining reading instruction is part of a national movement. We've gathered some of our favorite resources from local and national leaders to share in this section. We've included a small selection of resources for you to **watch**, **listen to**, and **read**.

Looking for resources from the Alaska Department of Education & Early Education? Visit our Reading Resources webpage at education.alaska.gov/Alaska-Reading-Resources

WATCH

Literacy: The Civil Right of the 21st Century with Tracy Weeden, Ed.D.
youtu.be/Yh0qqVKIUzQ

Scarborough's Reading Rope from Calgary Learning
youtu.be/_l8pzySr2bl

The Reading Brain from Hill Learning Center
youtu.be/A2HHRKpjLYM

Can We Afford to Ignore the Science of Reading? with Melissa Hostetter
youtu.be/9WJcgxyuATU

Why Explicit Instruction? with Anita Archer, Ph.D.
youtu.be/i-qNpFtcynI

LISTEN

Podclassed from *Reading Horizons*
readinghorizons.com/reading-resources/podcast

Science of Reading: The Podcast from *Amplify*
amplify.com/science-of-reading-the-podcast/

Sold a Story with *Emily Hanford*
features.apmreports.org/sold-a-story/

READ

Sounding Out a Better Way to Teach Reading by *Bella DiMarco*
nytimes.com/2022/10/06/education/learning/schools-teaching-reading-phonics.html

Teaching Reading Is Rocket Science by *Louisa Moats, Ed.D.*
aft.org/sites/default/files/moats.pdf

The Science of Reading Explained by *Cindy Jiban*
nwea.org/blog/2022/the-science-of-reading-explained/

What Is Reading? from *Reading Rockets*
readingrockets.org/article/what-reading

What Is the Science of Reading? from *The Reading League*
thereadingleague.org/what-is-the-science-of-reading/

What is the Best Way to Teach Children to Read? from *the NIH*
nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/reading/conditioninfo/teach

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Reading instruction would not be possible without the 7,298 classroom teachers and the thousands of administrators and staff currently serving public schools statewide, nor would it be possible without the thousands of early childhood educators and university faculty who serve students before they enter public school and after they graduate. Your leadership has a transformational power in the present and future of our students, communities, and state. We're every bit as grateful, too, for the first and forever educators of Alaska students: the families and communities that surround them. The knowledge and teachings you impart are invaluable and irreplaceable.

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