



EMPOWERED, INSPIRED, AND ENGAGED FOR SUCCESS

Alaska Embraces Evidence-Based Approaches to Literacy

| THE CHALLENGE

“The Alaska Reading Specialist Endorsement program has changed my life as a teacher and more importantly has changed the lives of my students in becoming proficient readers.”

– Alaska Educator

Alaska’s Education Challenge

On October 5, 2017, Alaska State Board of Education reviewed and accepted 13 recommendations bundled as Alaska’s Education Challenge.

The resolution identified the state’s top five priorities for education:

- » Amplify student learning
- » Ensure excellent educators
- » Modernize the education system
- » Inspire Tribal and community ownership of educational excellence
- » Promote safety and well-being

Learn more about Alaska’s commitment to literacy in our video, **Journey to the Alaska Science of Reading Symposium.**

The Alaska Reads Act

Reading and literacy are woven through Alaska's Education Challenge. The Alaska Reads Act, signed into law in June 2022, is focused on supporting all students to read at grade level by the end of third grade.

Region 16's Alaska Project

Region 16 is working with Alaska's Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) to provide capacity-building services by:

- » Providing equitable access to teachers' professional development using virtual courses and comprehensive online resources on [AKLearns.org](https://www.aklearns.org) and in-person events such as the **Science of Reading Symposium**.
- » Co-creating evidence-based research resources such as Alaska's Reading Playbook and Champions of Literacy.
- » Designing and providing technical assistance on the Science of Reading resources to meet the needs of Alaska's Education Challenge.

| HIGHLIGHTS

"Your program has given me invaluable knowledge and skills to now be the professional to guide instruction, not just follow a curriculum."

– Alaska Educator

Capacity-Building Approach

Honoring the students, families, and communities of Alaska, Region 16 and DEED co-developed resources uniquely designed for Alaska's education context. Teachers who participate in the professional learning become a part of a supportive network and feel connected to each other across the remoteness of Alaska.

Growing and Sustaining

Region 16 is developing a companion guide to Alaska's Reading Playbook focused on applying evidence-based literacy approaches to teaching Alaska Native languages in schools.

Working with Alaska Native speakers, the playbook will hone in on the specific types of language originating from Alaska's 21 official languages.

“It's about stewarding those relationships to sustain the work of literacy instruction and language revitalization.”

– Region 16 Director Bernie Sorenson

By the Numbers | Progress to Date

100%

- **Educators from 100% of Alaska's school districts** have participated in Region 16's professional learning sessions.

600+

- **600 teachers** have participated in Region 16's Science of Reading live trainings.

7000+

- **7000+ educators or leaders** have participated in Region 16's in-person or online Science of Reading events.

1615+

- **1615+ educators** have participated in six half-day training workshops.

100%

- **100% of program evaluation respondents** agreed or strongly agreed that Region 16's professional learning sessions were a productive use of their time in the areas of phonological awareness, phonics, and fluency.

“We wanted to create a network, but I didn't realize how strong it was going to be. The teachers have friends now across the state who they can call and ask, ‘Can you help me with this?’ or, ‘How do I apply this?’”

– Alaska Education Specialist Alecia Gardner

| INSIGHTS

“It is a well-rounded approach with a lot of touchstones: in-person training, online training, and cohorts within a district. I think that the approach to providing the training was well thought out and provided lots of options for not only districts, but also individual teachers.”

– Region 16 Steward

Region 16 Staff

Region 16 provides ongoing coaching and resources for educators to apply what they learned in the training. Together with DEED and Alaska Native speakers across the state, Region 16 is developing a companion guide to **Alaska’s Reading Playbook** focused on applying evidence-based literacy approaches to teaching Alaska Native languages in schools.

“The Science of Reading Symposium has been the most impactful initiative statewide. Going back, I’m seeing changes. In the first year, some teachers were realizing, ‘I haven’t been doing what’s best for my kids.’”

–Alaska State Director Tamara Van Whye

Families

A grandmother shared a personal story about the impact of Region 16’s work to support every child reading at grade level by third grade. Her granddaughter’s elementary school teacher participated in professional learnings to bolster effectiveness of reading instruction in her classroom.

“Now my granddaughter is in 2nd grade and is reading at a 4th grade level. I am seeing that teachers have the skills to build children’s reading skills. I can now watch my granddaughter enjoy reading.”

– Alaska grandmother

Educators

Teachers in the Alaska Reading Specialist Endorsement program shared their perspectives on the program and its impact on students.

“Using Alaska’s Reading Playbook and LETRS training, I have learned, step by step, the progression of teaching a child to read alongside simple assessments, gathering data, and using effective reading strategies and teaching tools to drive my direct instruction.”

–Alaska educator

“Here are the MAPS scores for one of my capstone students. A 20-point gain in three months takes my breath away, and it tells the story of your program supporting teachers with approaches that work for kids!”

–Alaska educator

| RESOURCES

“AKLearns.org hosts the products we’ve built in partnership with DEED to help improve reading across the state, including the Alaska Reading Blueprint, Champions of Literacy, and Alaska's Reading Playbook. Our resources are available to many different stakeholders.”

– Alaska State Director Tamara Van Whye

For more information, check out these resources from Region 16 and DEED:

- » **AKLearns**
- » **Alaska’s Literacy Blueprint**
- » **Alaska’s Reading Playbook**
- » **Champions of Literacy Resource Guide**
- » **Reading Playbook Trainings**
- » **Science of Reading Fliers**

| ABOUT REGION 16 COMPREHENSIVE CENTER

Region 16 Comprehensive Center is one of 19 Regional Comprehensive Centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education. Our center was created in 2019 to support state education agencies in Alaska, Oregon, and Washington.

As a consortium of 29 educational service districts, we engage state, regional, Tribal, school, and community partners to create the conditions for students, educators, and communities to learn and thrive.

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

To preserve the work our center developed with and for our constituents, this resource has been converted from its original form as a digital impact story to an archivable version. [Access our complete resource archive.](#)

The contents of this resource were developed under a grant from the Department of Education. However, the contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal government. This work has been created in partnership with the Region 16 Comprehensive Center.



REGION 16

Alaska
Oregon
Washington