



THE STATE  
of **ALASKA**  
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

**Department of Education  
& Early Development**

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

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Alaska Superintendents

Dear Dr. Ward

Dear Superintendents,

I trust you are enjoying the longer days and the emergence of spring in Alaska, one of the most beautiful times of the year. And what's even better? Spring Break! As we sprint through the second semester, this special week offers a chance to recharge before the final push. While I understand many of you may not fully disconnect, I hope you find moments of rest while staff and students take their well-deserved break.

Later this month, the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) will share details about the AK STAR assessments and an exciting new summer school grant opportunity.

[AS 14.30.765](#) *Reading intervention services and strategies*; progression paragraph (f) states, in part:

Following the [non-progression] meeting that parent or guardian may decide that the student will not progress to grade four or decide to progress the student to grade four by signing a waiver developed by the department acknowledging that the student is not prepared and agreeing to participate in an additional 20 hours of individual reading improvement plan intervention services during the summer before the student enters grade four.

The Alyeska Reading Institute ([ARI](#)<sup>1</sup>), a support arm of the [Alaska Reads Act](#)<sup>2</sup> ([HB 114](#), Chapter 40, SLA 22) has allocated grant funds to assist school districts with their summer programs. More details

<sup>1</sup> State of Alaska. Department of Education and Early Development. The Alyeska Reading Institute (ARI).

<https://education.alaska.gov/alyeska-reading-institute>

<sup>2</sup> State of Alaska. Department of Education and Early Development. The Alaska Reads Act. <https://education.alaska.gov/akreads>

will follow including how resources will be prioritized. The aim is to provide districts with the necessary support and funds to meet the Alaska Reads Act requirements for summer assistance.

Regarding the AK STAR assessment and the FY23 scores, they will soon be released. Three superintendents joined me in a policy review of AK STAR. Alignment of our assessment reporting data was key to this work. I extend my heartfelt thanks to Roy Getchell (Haines Borough Schools), Amy Brower (Dillingham City Schools), and Debbe Lancaster (Yukon Flats Schools) for their contributions to the Policy Committee for AK STAR. A video has been prepared to visually explain the need for adjustments in the scores and their impact on last year's assessment outcomes. I hope this resource assists you in communicating achievement data within your districts. You're receiving this information prior to its dissemination to your assessment leads.

**Updates to [AK STAR Cut Scores 2023](#)<sup>3</sup>:**

This video gives an inside look at Andy, a third-grade student, as he participates in assessments covering English Language Arts through Map Growth and AK STAR. The video articulates the impact of adjusting the cut scores for AK STAR as well as the importance of using the assessment information for decision making.

Thank you for your exemplary leadership in Alaska. It has been an honor serving as the Commissioner of Education, following my tenure as a superintendent. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions or concerns.

Cheers,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Deena Bishop', with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Deena Bishop, Ed.D.  
Commissioner

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<sup>3</sup> YouTube. Alaska DEED. Updating AK STAR Cut Scores 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wwb740gGVUU>