



THE STATE  
of **ALASKA**  
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

**Department of Education  
& Early Development**

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

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August 2021

Dear Educator,

Assessment happens every day in classrooms across our state. We administer assessments to make sure our instruction results in students learning what we want them to know and do and helps ensure that support is available for all students. Assessment is a key part of student learning, and everything we do should work toward this goal.

PEAKS, the 2021 statewide summative assessment, was administered in an unprecedented context. Never before has Alaska, or any other state, attempted to obtain valid and reliable data during a global pandemic that disrupted even the most basic routines in society, including our public schools.

It is important to keep in mind that for many students, instruction and assessment looked very different during the COVID-19 pandemic. As local school boards managed the impacts of COVID, assessment participation rates among students taking the assessment were so low that the department cautions against drawing sweeping conclusions about student performance statewide. However, we can still glean helpful information by looking at performance at the school and individual student levels. Parents and educators can use individual student data from PEAKS and other local assessments to make effective instructional decisions during the 2021-2022 school year. Additionally, though summative assessment data typically guides activities associated with the Every Student Succeeds Act, the accountability requirements were waived by the United States Department of Education for the 2020-2021 school year. Alaska's Department of Education will continue to support ongoing school improvement efforts in local school districts, including stewardship of COVID relief funds.

Alaska is blessed with many great schools and hardworking educators who worked with families to meet the challenge COVID-19 presented for our students this past year. Thank you for your hard work to provide an excellent education to every student every day.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Johnson".

Dr. Michael Johnson  
Commissioner