



## Superintendent Follow-Up Responses from Biweekly Meeting 4.7.25

**Commissioner, DEED (EED sponsored)** <deed.commissioner@alaska.gov> Fri, Apr 18, 2025 at 1:41 PM  
To: Alaska Gateway <pmayer@agsd.us>, Aleutian East <mfranklin@aebsd.org>, Aleutian Region <mhanley@aleutregion.org>, Anchorage Schools <news@asdk12.org>, Annette Island Schools <tlindsey@aisdk12.org>, Bering Strait <tdodd@bssd.org>, Bristol Bay <superintendent@bbbsd.net>, "carolp@yakutatschools.org" <carolp@yakutatschools.org>, Catham <rwatkins@chathamssd.org>, Chugach <tmase@chugachschools.com>, Cordova <arussin@cordovasd.org>, Craig <jhanson@craigschools.com>, "david\_vadivelloo@nsbsd.org" <david\_vadivelloo@nsbsd.org>, Deidre Jenson <jensond@sitkaschools.org>, Delta Greely <mlee@dgsd.us>, Denail <danpolta@dbsd.org>, Dillingham <abrower@dlgsd.org>, Fairbanks North Star <superintendent@k12northstar.org>, Galena <jason.johnson@galenanet.com>, Haines Borough School <rgetchell@hbsd.net>, Hoonah <howardd@hoonahschools.org>, Hydaburg <bmwarey@hydaburg.k12.ak.us>, Iditarod <johnbruce@iditarodsd.org>, Juneau <frank.hauser@juneauschools.org>, Kake <agallanos@kakeschools.com>, Kashunamiut <jcampbell@chevakschool.org>, Kenai <cholland@kpbsd.k12.ak.us>, Ketchikan <michael.robbs@k21schools.org>, Klawock <jim.holien@klawockschool.com>, Kodiak <cyndy.mika@kibsd.org>, Kuspuk <maguillard@kuspuk.org>, Lake and Peninsula <kluke@lpsd.com>, Lower Kuskokwim <Andrew\_anderson@lksd.org>, Lower Yukon <jhargis@lysd.org>, Mat Su <randy.trani@matsuk12.us>, "Huntington, Mary L (MEHS)" <suzzukh@mehs.us>, Nenana <pmanning@nenanalynx.org>, Nome <jburgess@nomeschools.org>, Northwest Arctic <twalker@nwarctic.org>, Pelican City <bagenbroad@pelicanschool.org>, Petersburg <contact@pcsd.us>, Pribilof <baldwinm@pribilofsd.org>, Robyn Taylor <rtaylor@pcsd.us>, Saint Mary's <tpoage@smcsd.us>, Skagway <jcoughran@skagwayschool.org>, Southeast Island <superintendent@sisd.org>, Southwest Region <afinkenbinder@swrsd.org>, Theresa Laville <tlaville@crsd.us>, Unalaska City <jwilson@ucsd.net>, Valdez City <jweber@valdezcityschools.org>, Wrangell City <bburr@wpsd.us>, Yukon Flats <debbe.lancaster@yfsd.org>, Yukon Koyukuk <kboyd@yksd.com>, Yupitt <sballard@yupit.org>

Dear Superintendents,

I hope you're enjoying a pleasant Friday ahead of the holiday weekend. Our team at DEED has worked to provide the most accurate and up-to-date responses available at this time to address your recent inquiries. Below is a follow-up to the questions raised during the Superintendent Biweekly Meeting held on Monday, April 7.

### Federal Title VI Non-Discrimination Assurances Letter Questions:

- 1. Are districts required to sign the Title VI certification letter that was sent out on Friday, April 4, 2025, or is there any additional action that needs to be taken beyond existing federal assurances?**

The Commissioner will be signing the certification on behalf of DEED and submitting it to the U.S. Department of Education (US ED) by April 24, 2025, affirming Alaska's compliance with federal anti-discrimination laws. Each district superintendent or chief school administrator will sign the FY2026 Consolidated Federal Programs Assurances & Certifications Packet – attached. Please email the signed certification form to [deborah.riddle@alaska.gov](mailto:deborah.riddle@alaska.gov) by 5:00 p.m. on April 24, 2025. Then, as part of the standard annual process, upload the signed packet to your Consolidated Application form. Please see the attached letter from the Commissioner for additional details.

- 2. Since the Title VI letter specifically addresses race, does it also apply to - or conflict with - other federally protected categories such as socioeconomic status, language, disability, or tribal affiliation?**

DEED does not have any further information on US ED's intent beyond the certification letter itself and other documents referenced in the certification letter. We suggest that school districts review this question with their legal counsel and consider all guidance from US ED on this topic. We do note that, on its face, the April 3 letter focuses on Title VI, which addresses discrimination on the basis of "race, color, or national origin," and references the Supreme Court's decision in *SFFA v. Harvard*.

**3. Does the Title VI certification letter apply strictly to Title VI compliance, or is it intended to apply more broadly to all district practices, including those not directly funded under Title VI (e.g., optional programs, DEI initiatives, access based on socioeconomic status)?**

Again, DEED does not have any further information on US ED's intent beyond the certification letter itself and other documents referenced in the certification. We suggest that school districts review this question with their legal counsel and consider all guidance from US ED on this topic. We do note that, on its face, the April 3 letter and other recent guidance from US ED, including the *Dear Colleague letter* and FAQs, reference DEI programs. Both of these documents are attached.

**4. Are programs that provide benefits or services exclusively to Alaska Native and American Indian (ANAI) students—such as school supply distributions—still allowable under federal guidelines, including Title VI?**

DEED is signing assurances related only to federal funds distributed through the state. The ANAI funding source in question involves a direct federal-to-district allocation. Please refer to the guidance provided directly by the federal funding agency to determine what is allowable under that specific program.

Comprehensive State Literacy Development (CSLD) Grant Questions:

**1. Is there an update on the reading grant, including when districts can expect the RFA to be released, what the submission deadlines will be, and the expected timeline for districts to complete and submit their applications?**

CSLD Grant – Notice of Intent to Apply

DEED will issue a Letter of Intent to Apply for the CSLD Grant on Monday, April 21, 2025. The CSLD grant supports the advancement of literacy skills from birth through grade 12, with a focus on disadvantaged children. This work aligns with the Alaska Reads Act, ensuring equity of access and opportunity for all Alaska students. To help DEED plan effectively and ensure eligible Local Education Agencies (LEAs) receive timely information and support, we strongly encourage eligible districts to submit a non-binding Notice of Intent to Apply. This notice is encouraged but not required, and submission does not obligate the district to complete an application.

Key Grant Priorities

Successful subgrantees will outline clear goals to increase literacy across age bands through the use of evidence-based practices. Grant funding must be allocated as follows:

- Minimum 15% for birth to kindergarten entry
- Minimum 40% for kindergarten through grade 5
- Minimum 40% for grades 6 through 12

Participation Expectations

Selected subgrantees will be expected to:

- Conduct a comprehensive literacy needs assessment
- Implement evidence-based instruction and interventions

- Provide high-quality professional development for educators
- Engage families and the community in literacy efforts
- Participate in a virtual subgrantee network
- Attend annual in-person networking events
- Fulfill grant monitoring and reporting requirements

#### Important Dates

- Letter of Intent Template Provided to Eligible Districts: Monday, April 21, 2025
- Letter of Intent Response Due: Friday, April 25, 2025
- RFA Opens: No later than Wednesday, April 30, 2025
- Application Due: Friday, May 30, 2025
- Grant Awards Announced: No later than Wednesday, June 18, 2025

#### **2. Which districts are eligible for the reading grant, and what specific criteria (such as economic disadvantage or other data points) are being used to determine eligibility?**

Eligibility for the CSLD grant is determined based on federally aligned criteria related to student poverty levels. Each Local Education Agency (LEA) has been evaluated using these criteria, and their eligibility status is included in the attached document. Districts highlighted in orange are ineligible under the current criteria. If you believe your district's eligibility status is inaccurate, please contact Kathy Moffitt at [kathy.moffitt@alaska.gov](mailto:kathy.moffitt@alaska.gov) and Diane Orr at [diane.orr@alaska.gov](mailto:diane.orr@alaska.gov).

To qualify for CSLD subgrant funding, an LEA must meet **one** of the following conditions:

1. At least 50% of the enrolled students served by the LEA are from low-income families, **or**
2. At least 30% of the schools served by the LEA qualify as "high-need" schools, as defined below:
  - Elementary, Middle, and K-12 Schools: 50% or more of students are from low-income families
  - High Schools: 40% or more of students are from low-income families

We look forward to our next biweekly superintendent meeting on Monday, April 21. Please bring any follow up questions you may have regarding these issues or other concerns. I hope you are all able to unplug from work over the Easter weekend and enjoy time with your family and friends.

Cheers,






Deena

**Office of the Commissioner**

The State of Alaska

---

**5 attachments**

-  **FY26 Consolidated Federal Programs Assurances Certifications Packet .docx**  
173K
-  **Commissioner Letter Regarding Title VI Assurances.pdf**  
369K
-  **OCR Dear Colleague Letter 2.14.25.pdf**  
169K
-  **frequently-asked-questions-about-racial-preferences-and-stereotypes-under-title-vi-of-civil-rights-act-109530.pdf**  
268K
-  **FY25 AK Economically Disadvantaged Eligibility by District 4.17.25.docx**  
30K