



THE STATE  
of **ALASKA**  
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY


**Department of Education  
& Early Development**

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

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

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Superintendents

**FROM:** Heidi Teshner, Acting Commissioner 

**DATE:** January 30, 2023

**SUBJECT:** CANVAS Learning Management System

For the past three years, the infusion of millions of dollars of federal COVID-relief funds have assisted school districts and the State of Alaska with responding to the immediate health and safety needs of all the people in our schools and increased educational and social-emotional needs students developed over the course of the pandemic. The Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) has been consistent in our guidance to districts: use the funds to address immediate needs and invest in opportunities, such as professional development, that will bring long-term improvements in educational outcomes and maximum benefit for students, and to be cautious of depending on the funds for salaries or purchasing services that create recurring expenses still present after the one-time funds are expended.

In the initial response to providing distance education to all Alaskan students, DEED procured a contract with the learning management system (LMS) CANVAS. The purpose of this was so that every district could administer learning remotely using CANVAS. Given the immediate needs for remote instruction due to the pandemic have passed, the end of one-time COVID-relief funds, and the passage of the Alaska Reads Act (HB114, Chapter 40, SLA 2022) directing the department to create a virtual education consortium, DEED has determined it is in the best interest of teachers and students not to renew the statewide contract with CANVAS.

At its core, CANVAS is designed as a student-facing platform. With Alaska being a local control state, individual school districts are able to choose which LMS to use. DEED's procurement of CANVAS allowed districts already using CANVAS to use that space in their budget for other needs and allowed other districts to begin using the LMS at no cost to them during an unprecedented period of social and economic disruptions.

As a government agency, DEED must be fiscally responsible. Given the fact that resources are limited, DEED has determined that is a better use of funds to invest in improving educators' skills, capacity, and confidence in delivering distance education regardless of which LMS their

school uses rather than using those funds to purchase a blanket license for one specific LMS. Providing LMS access for all Alaska school districts was the right move for Alaska at that time. However, at this time, the right move for Alaska is investing in resources that will equip educators to improve virtual education in the state and will pay dividends for years to come. We will do this by focusing our efforts into building up DEED's existing eLearning platform.

With tight budgets across Alaska, I encourage you to carefully consider what your district needs in an LMS. Your district may choose to continue utilizing CANVAS as an LMS, but you may also find that another platform can meet your needs at lower costs. While DEED's contract with CANVAS remains available for district usage through June 30, 2023, taking action now to determine what your district needs will facilitate a smooth transition. There will be a webinar on Thursday, February 2, with CANVAS to discuss transition options.

DEED, and CANVAS, are both ready to assist districts through this transition period, so please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions you may have. And thank you for all you do for the students in Alaska.