



ACTION PLANNING WORKSHEET

Alaska's Action Plan to Help More of its Young People Graduate High School, Ready for College, Work & Life

Name of Summit State or Community: Alaska

Date and Location of Summit: Education Summit November 13-14, 2008, Anchorage, Alaska

Geographical Area Covered by Action Plan: State of Alaska

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Main Point of Contact: Cynthia Curran, Director, Teaching and Learning Support
Department of Education & Early Development
801 West 10th Street, Suite 200
PO Box 110500, Juneau, Alaska 99811-0500

I. Building Knowledge: Understanding Your State's or Community's Dropout & College-Readiness Challenges

1. What is your state's or community's current graduation rate? (please cite the source and methodology)

Graduation Rates in Alaska

The Graduation Rate is reported as a fraction. The numerator is the sum of the number of graduates receiving a regular diploma before June 30. The denominator is the sum of the number of graduates, plus the number of dropouts in grade nine three school years prior, plus the number of unduplicated dropouts in grade ten two school years prior, plus the number of unduplicated dropouts in grade eleven in the prior school year, plus the number of unduplicated dropouts in grade 12 during the current year, plus the number of grade 12 continuing students.

A **graduate** is defined as a student who was received a regular diploma from a state- or district-approved education program, as evidenced by receipt of a secondary school diploma from school authorities. Any student who receives a diploma under a waiver from the competency examination required under AS 14.03075 (a), as specified by the state board is considered to be a graduate. This does not include an individual who:

- receives a certificate of completion;
- receives a certificate of attendance;

The statewide Graduation Rate has remained relatively consistent over the last five years, however the number of graduates has increased for four consecutive years:

<u>School Year</u>	<u>Graduation Rate</u>	<u>Graduate Count</u>
2004	62.9%	7,270
2005	61.4%	6,905
2006	61.6%	7,361
2007	63.0%	7,666
2008	62.4%	7,796

The Alaska Native/American Indian Graduation Rate has shown improvement over the same five year time period:

<u>School Year</u>	<u>Graduation Rate</u>	<u>Graduate Count</u>
2004	46.1%	1,327
2005	43.2%	1,233
2006	45.1%	1,442
2007	51.2%	1,689
2008	47.8%	1,508

2. What does both national and local data indicate about your state's or community's graduation and college-going rates over the last few years (e.g. over the last 2, 5 and 10 years)? Have the schools' rates been improving or getting worse? How do your local statistics compare with your state and the nation as a whole?

See previous chart.

3. Please describe what efforts have or will be taken to better understand the issues from key perspectives, such as parents and young people themselves. Explain what data analysis, surveys, interviews or other efforts have or will be implemented to build your knowledge base of who drops out, from which schools, when, and why. What is known, and what do you still seek to learn?

Commissioner LeDoux convened a group of stakeholders to discuss issues around Alaska's graduation rate. The group met on February 19-20 at the Talking Book Library in Anchorage.

The group examined data on Alaska's graduation rates and dropout [leaver] rates and then discussed what Alaska's data means. The group listed possible reasons why students aren't graduating and discussed strategies for recovering and retaining leavers. The group also brainstormed ideas for immediate and long-term strategies to address the issue on the student, classroom, school, family and the community levels.

The graduation rate working group is continuing to meet regularly to gather more information from different perspectives. This is being accomplished by adding constituencies that have not been previously represented to the working group.

II. **Rallying Your State or Community: Getting Buy-In to Address the Crisis**

1. What key data and message points have you developed around the issue to secure commitment from your community's and state's leaders and to mobilize the general public? What's the impact of the dropout challenge on your economy, state or city budget, social services, employers, post-secondary

institutions, etc? If you don't yet have these data and message points, what are your plans to obtain them?

This continues to be a work in progress. Our graduation rate working group has convened twice since the Education Summit in November. At the meeting held April 16, the group drafted letters that will be sent to parents, mayors and city councils/borough governments and school districts to let each stakeholder group know what they can do to help increase the graduation rates in their communities. Commissioner LeDoux plans for the group to continue to meet through the summer and into the fall to fully develop actions steps begun at the April meeting.

2. Who is serving or can serve as your state's or community's champion and chief spokesperson around the high school dropout issue? If multiple spokespeople are needed, which leaders – elected officials, business leaders, other local influentials – will be recruited?

The Commissioner of Education & Early Development, Larry LeDoux is the chief spokesperson around this issue. The following people serve on the core committee and as spokespeople in their communities and organizations.

Colleen Patrick Riley	Alaska Department of Corrections
Debbie Bogart	Anchorage's Promise
Bunny Schaeffer	Northwest Arctic Borough School District
Becky Huggins	Principal Mid-Valley High School
Bill Watkins	Principal Kodiak High School
Kathy Watkins	Project Specialist The Kodiak Learning Cafe & Career Center
Phil Schneider	State Board of Education & Early Development
Jim Hickerson	Superintendent Bering Strait School District
Sam Spinella	Principal Benny Benson Alternative School
Ronalda Cadiente Brown	Juneau School District
Tom Morgan	Communities in Schools
Carol Comeau	Superintendent Anchorage School District
Tom Nelson	Department of Labor and Workforce Development
PJ Ford Slack	Superintendent Delta Greely School District
Peggy Cowan	Superintendent Juneau School District
Kathleen Castle	Alaska Construction Academy
Ester Cox	Chair, State Board of Education & Early Development
Teresa Holt	Governor's Council on Disabilities
Millie Ryan	Governor's Council on Disabilities
John Lamont	Superintendent Lower Yukon School District
Paul Seaton	Alaska Legislature, Representative and Chair of House Education Subcommittee

EED Staff:

Erik McCormick	Director, Assessment and Accountability, EED
Cynthia Curran	Director, Teaching and Learning Support, EED
Larry LeDoux	Commissioner, EED

3. What is your state's or community's vision statement for your young people, related to their successful completion of high school and preparation for college and/or work? What is your quantifiable long-term goal (e.g. 10-year) for your dropout and college-readiness challenges?

At the Education Summit in November 2008, almost 400 Alaskans came together to develop a vision for education Alaska. The vision statement developed at the summit is as follows:

An Alaska education opens a world of possibilities.

- Our parents and students value and support learning
- Our communities support dreams and create opportunities
- Our schools inspire thinking and creativity
- Our graduates understand the past and build the future

III. Identifying Solutions: Considering and Prioritizing Potential Solutions to Comprehensively Address Your Local Dropout Challenge

The Alliance advocates four focus areas that we believe to be key in addressing the dropout issue at the state and local levels: **transforming schools** including through increasing curricular rigor and relevance, **supporting young people** holistically with wraparound services, **developing effective policies**, and **employing data systems** as a dropout prevention tool.

1. Please identify your highest-priority strategies and/or reforms consistent with *Grad Nation* that your state or community will pursue in order to **transform the schools** that the majority of your local dropouts attend. For each priority, what would you need to do in the next 6-12 months to advance it? Is anything already underway locally to support it? What support or information would help you make better progress?

This is a work in progress. Action steps were further developed at the April meeting but have not been prioritized.

2. Please identify your highest-priority strategies, programs, policies, and/or reforms consistent with *Grad Nation* that your state or community will pursue in order to **support young people**. How will more young people, particularly those most in need, receive wraparound supports in and out of school, such as tutoring, afterschool programs, mentors, social services, health care and others? For each priority, what would you need to do in the next 6-12 months to advance it? Is anything already underway locally to support it? What support or information would help you make better progress? (Example from New York State: "1. Ensure that each student is connected to one caring adult in school, by structuring mentoring programs that can be implemented with limited resources. 2. Engage the community in the mentoring process, especially during afterschool hours. 3. Provide quality afterschool programs that can increase student voice and provide social, emotional, physical and intellectual support to youth. 4. Identify and enhance mechanisms of improving student engagement in the educational process.")

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3. Please identify your highest-priority policies or reforms consistent with *Grad Nation* that your state or community will pursue in order to **develop effective policies** at the local or state level that encourage high school completion and college readiness. For each, what would you need to do in the next 6-12 months to advance this priority? Is anything already underway locally to support it? What support or information would help you make better progress?

(Select examples from New York state: "1. Encourage the Board of Regents to include service learning in the revised learning standards. 2. Provide a minimum of 5 hours of service learning training to all staff and administrators as part of the professional development plan to effectively implement revisions made to the learning standards to include service learning. 3. Provide universal health care, including mental health. 4. Short of that, ensure that 90% of all children without health care are enrolled in Child Health Plus. 5. Provide full-day Pre-K with transportation. 6. Develop Regents policies and regulations for meaningful student involvement in decision making in schools. 7. End out of school suspension in the next year." Other example drawn from Grad Nation: "We will work with our state legislature to raise our maximum compulsory school age from 16 to 18 years old.")

This is a work in progress. Action steps were further developed at the April meeting and will be further fleshed out. See pages 8-9 of this document.

4. Please identify your highest-priority strategies, programs, policies, and/or reforms consistent with *Grad Nation* that your state or community will pursue in order to **employ data systems** that identify those young people most at-risk for dropping out and drive appropriate supports and services. For each, what would you need to do in the next 6-12 months to advance this priority? Is anything already underway locally to support it? What support or information would help you make better progress?

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IV. Organizing for Long-Term Success: Getting the Right People on Board, Committing to Action, Ensuring Accountability, Securing Resources, and Tracking Progress over Time

1. What group or committee will coordinate and sustain the work outlined in this action plan? What leaders does it have from various sectors – business, education, nonprofit, government, faith, etc.? (Please submit group's roster along with this plan.) Who else is needed? Who convenes the group, how often, and what sub-groups or committees does your effort need?

The graduation rate working group includes leaders from business, school districts, Anchorage's Promise, the university system, Communities in Schools, the Governor's Council on Disabilities, the Alaska Department of Corrections, the state school board, alternative high schools. We are planning to add students and young people to the committee for the next meeting and the meetings that follow.

See pages 8-9

2. What financial, human, and other resources are needed in order to begin acting on this plan? What resources are currently available, what will potentially need to be blended, and what new resources will need to be sought to do this work? Who might help secure additional resources to fill the gaps, and/or what funders (or others) may be approached? Will your state or community set a resource goal along with the outcome goal?

The Department of Education & Early Development has committed to convening the graduation working group on a bi-monthly basis. As the action steps are identified, needed resources will also be identified.

3. How will your community or state evaluate its dropout prevention efforts to ensure it is making a difference? What is the plan to monitor and track the progress being made on its developed goals? How will you maintain visibility around the local dropout prevention issue by reporting to the public on the progress being made?

With the development of the Alaska Education Plan, the Commissioner plans to evaluate on a yearly basis the steps that have been taken to meet the plan's goals. Results will be made available to the public in a variety of formats including online and in brochures.

V. Staying Connected to the America's Promise Alliance: Identifying Long-term Interests, Priorities, and Points of Alignment

1. As part of our Alliance's goal to reach 15 million young people with more supports (i.e. the Five Promises) by 2012, America's Promise has committed to resourcing and advocating for certain strategic priorities. Together, we are always looking for states and communities that share similar interests and that may provide effective models for policy and practice, investment opportunities and other points of alignment, including possible technical assistance from our Alliance partners. Please describe if your action plan has strategies specific to:
 - a. Focusing on the middle school years, especially providing service-learning and career exploration opportunities in and out of school
 - b. Improving young people's access to quality health care, including promotion of SCHIP and Medicaid public health insurance programs
 - c. Creating community hubs (e.g. schools, afterschool programs, community centers) where coordinated wraparound supports are available to young people and their families
 - d. Engaging parents and caregivers to increase graduation and college readiness rates

- e. Supporting young people in foster care so they graduate from high school prepared for college, work and life

- f. Developing young people's financial literacy

If your plan does not include any of the above but your state or community has strong interest in developing one or more of these strategies, please note accordingly.

2. How can the America's Promise Alliance best support your state or community with the implementation of this dropout prevention plan? The Alliance is interested in hearing how we can best assist you in your dropout prevention efforts, including resources we can provide, relationships we can facilitate, and any other needs your community may have.

The publications you provide and the information provided on your web site are most helpful.

Action Plan: Schools				
Goal	To improve the connectedness and/or flexibility of our schools to meet the needs of all students.			
Actions to accomplish goal	Building upon what is currently in place	Who is responsible?	Partners to accomplish actions	Target date for completion
1. Add mentoring/Advisory course to the requirements for recertification.	The recency system currently in place. Identify specific course to build teachers capacity to function as a mentor/advisor.	DEED	University, ASDN, AASA, ACSA etc.	2 years
2. Provide Technical Assistance to Advertise/Develop Competency-Based Education where credit is awarded when standards are achieved (demonstrated through assessments and/or performances)	Refer to state policy for graduation requirements AC 4AAC 06.075(e), and current successful models using competency based systems.	DEED	DEED, Current competency based models that are successful .	6 months to 3 years
3. Examination/Analysis of policies and procedures that push-out students (based on the fact that learning is the constant and time is the variable). Develop a process and the tools necessary to revise existing push-out policies and procedures.	Internal and External Reviews, Accreditation, School and District improvement plans.	DEED, LEA	LEA, Competency based models that are successful.	2 years
4. Assessment system that informs instruction.	Multiple models currently in place	Legislature, DEED, and Feds.	Workkeys, ACT, MAPS, AIMS, ETS, etc.	Time line is linked with current assessment

(Ensure schools have resources and bandwidth)	(Workkeys, MAPS, AIMS, WIN)			contract.
5. Connect ILP's and Assessments (pre-K – 16) Provide guidelines for contents and implementation of ILP	Multiple Models already in place – portfolio of evidence to demonstrate a student has met or exceeded the competencies for a diploma.	DEED and LEA	Models from schools and Districts that are currently using ILP's	
6. Adjust funding formula to allow for adequate funding for alternative options. Also offer block grants to support vocational programs in our districts.	Refer to current funding formula that does not provide additional funding for alternative (school within a school) programs and past funding formulas that did provide additional funding to support alternative programs.	Legislature	AASB and DEED	Adjust funding formula to allow for adequate money for alternative options Next Year
7. Share successful programs and practices, e.g. alternative school conferences, Advisor/Advisee programs, training programs for ILP's, competency based systems, etc.	Refer to existing successful programs that are flexible and have policies and practices that are focused on the needs of students.	DEED coordinates	ASDN (Web-site and training)	3 months.