

Larry LeDoux
Commissioner
P.O. Box 110500
Juneau, AK 99811-0500
www.eed.state.ak.us



Eric Fry
Information Officer
907.465.2851
cell: 907.321.5564
eric.fry@alaska.gov

Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 18, 2008

Alaska will hold education summit in November

JUNEAU-- Four hundred Alaskans will convene in Anchorage in November to draft a statewide education plan aimed at improving success rates for Alaska's students at all education levels – early childhood, elementary, high school, technical training centers, college or continuing education, Alaska Education Commissioner Larry LeDoux announced today.

"If Alaska is to meet the challenges of the future, we need a well-educated, work-ready population," Gov. Sarah Palin said. "It's time for Alaskans to come together to create a plan to make this a reality. All of us -- parents and business people, teachers and students, public servants and community leaders -- must contribute and be heard."

The statewide education summit, dubbed "Building Alaska's Future One Student at a Time," is sponsored by the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development in partnership with the University of Alaska System and school districts across the state.

The summit will tie together the successful education programs that already exist throughout Alaska and recommend improvements where needed. In addition, summit participants will define broadly what every Alaska high school graduate should know and be able to do to successfully enter the workforce or go on for additional education.

"Alaska educators and students have worked hard in the past decade to improve achievement in reading, writing and math, and we are not backing away from this essential task," said Commissioner LeDoux. "But now we must broaden our vision for education. What must Alaskans do to have world-class schools with world-class students who are ready for work or ready for college or technical training? What will it take to have a seamless transition for students from preschool through high school and beyond? Without the answers to these questions, we don't have a way to direct our efforts in education or to hold ourselves accountable."

University of Alaska President Mark Hamilton said the summit is necessary to focus attention on issues that should be at the top of the state's policy agenda. "Alaska is not keeping pace with other states, and it should be of concern to every single parent, every

EDUCATION
& EARLY DEVELOPMENT

single employer and every single young person hoping to live a meaningful life,” Hamilton said. “If a third grader can’t read or a high school student can’t write a term paper or a college freshman doesn’t know how to use a library—that troubles me deeply.”

Approximately 400 Alaskans will be invited to the summit, which will be held at the Dena’ina Center in downtown Anchorage on Nov. 13-14. Invitees will include parents, students, teams of educators and policymakers from all school districts, the State Board of Education & Early Development, the University of Alaska, representatives of the Native community, the business community and nonprofit organizations, legislators and other public servants.

All Alaskans will have an opportunity to participate prior to the summit in an online survey about education in Alaska. The department will publicize the summit web site once it is available. Results of the survey will be shared with summit participants and the public.

Participants at the invitation-only summit will discuss topics such as early education, reinventing education for the 21st century, workforce development, partnerships between K-12 education and universities, preparing students for education and training after high school, public education finance and school facilities, outcomes for high school graduates, the role of culture, community and family in education, rural education, safe schools, technology, and teacher recruitment and retention.

Previous education summits in Alaska have focused on implementing statewide academic standards in the core areas of reading, writing and math in K-12 education. The 2008 education summit will result in a blueprint for an education plan aimed at ensuring Alaska’s students have the skills necessary to enter the workforce or go on for additional technical or college level work. Working groups will continue to meet after the summit to provide more details for the plan.

For more information: Eric Fry, Information Officer, Alaska Department of Education & Early Development, 907-465-2851, eric.fry@alaska.gov.

