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Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 22, 2009

Six school districts will pilot preschool programs with state grants

JUNEAU -- Six Alaska school districts have been awarded state grants to pilot preschool programs over the next school year, Alaska Education Commissioner Larry LeDoux announced today.

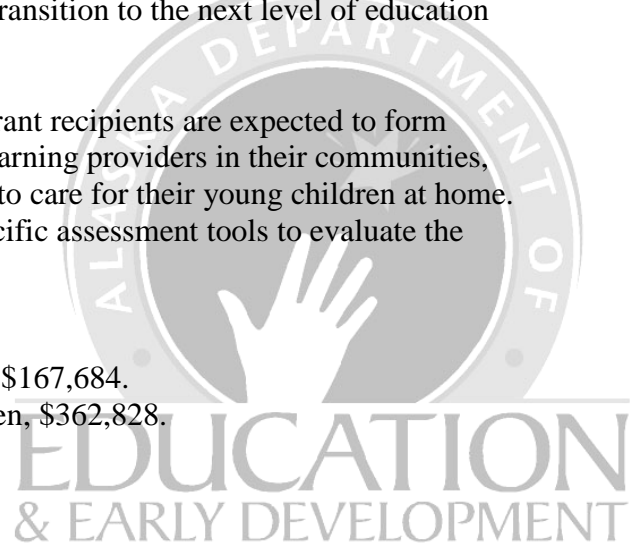
The grants, ranging from \$150,000 to \$380,000 each, will allow the recipients to serve approximately 330 children and their families in half-day programs during the school year. The pilot program was proposed by the Palin administration and funded at \$2 million by the legislature this past session.

“The pilot’s purpose is not to establish whether preschool is beneficial for children. We already know it does help prepare children to start kindergarten ready to learn,” LeDoux said. “Rather, the pilot will allow school districts to create preschool programs that incorporate Alaska’s early learning guidelines in ways that are tailored to their communities.”

Improving families’ voluntary access to affordable, high-quality early care and education programs is one of the actions recommended in the Alaska Education Plan, created by educators and members of the public at a summit in November 2008. The education plan also recommends that Alaska’s public education system be aligned from preschool to postsecondary, so that students are prepared to transition to the next level of education and eventually the work force.

Aside from operating in-school programs, the grant recipients are expected to form partnerships that will strengthen current early learning providers in their communities, and to provide guidance to families that choose to care for their young children at home. The grant also requires the recipients to use specific assessment tools to evaluate the children.

The following school districts received grants:
Anchorage, two classrooms serving 32 children \$167,684.
Bering Strait, four classrooms serving 62 children, \$362,828.



Nome, two classrooms serving 50 children, \$219,539.
Juneau, two classrooms serving 40 children, \$201,073.
Lower Kuskokwim, two classrooms serving 40 students, \$337,732.
Yukon Koyukuk, seven classrooms serving 39 students, \$325,445.

In addition, the department will use the remaining \$385,699 of the legislative appropriation to support early learning in chronically underperforming school districts, affecting up to seven additional communities and 100 additional children.

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