

Mike Hanley
Commissioner

P.O. Box 110500
Juneau, AK 99811-0500
education.alaska.gov

SEAL OF THE STATE
STATE OF ALASKA

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT**

Eric Fry
Information Officer

907.465.2851
cell: 907.321.5564
eric.fry@alaska.gov

Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 2, 2014

State to Award Digital Teaching Initiative Grants

JUNEAU – The Alaska Department of Education & Early Development will award grants to four school districts to strengthen instruction through digital teaching and learning, both within their districts and across district boundaries.

The Digital Teaching Initiative grants were proposed by Gov. Parnell and enacted and funded by the legislature in the past session. They will provide funding for three years beginning in fiscal year 2015.

“This is an opportunity to strengthen 21st century best practices in Alaska and provide greater access to high-quality teachers and content for more of our Alaskan students,” Alaska Education Commissioner Mike Hanley said.

The Digital Teaching Initiative is designed to deliver high-quality interactive distance courses to middle and high school students; increase student access to a diverse array of courses; empower teachers to reach beyond their own classrooms; train teachers; and expand school districts’ infrastructure, technology, and staffing. The initiative promotes students’ preparation for career training, college, and the Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS).

The department will award grants to four school districts, each of which is partnering with other school districts.

The Kenai Peninsula Borough School District will receive an \$819,915 grant and is partnering with the Bristol Bay Borough School District and the Cordova City School District.

The grant is intended to increase distance-delivered math, science, and Advanced Placement courses; train and evaluate teachers for best practices in online and blended instruction; create support services; codify best practices; and conduct replication studies in the Bristol Bay and Cordova school districts. Blended instruction refers to courses that are partly in-person and partly online.

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF
**EDUCATION
& EARLY DEVELOPMENT**

The Copper River School District will receive a \$652,053 grant and will focus its partnering on small, remote districts.

The grant is intended to expand access to high-quality, APS-eligible courses, including dual-credit high school/university coursework and innovative college- and career-focused elective courses through True North Academy Online, an online high school that dovetails with a planned variable-length residential educational program.

The Kodiak Island Borough School District will receive an \$890,260 grant and is partnering with the Pribilof, Lower Kuskokwim, Lower Yukon, Northwest Arctic, Lake and Peninsula, Nome, St. Mary's, and Annette Island school districts.

The grant is intended to increase student engagement and academic performance in core content areas with an emphasis in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM); increase life-literacy skills; enhance and expand online delivery models; and create a network of well-trained online educators.

The Ketchikan Borough School District will receive an \$837,744 grant and is partnering with the Craig, Annette Island, Klawock, Hydaburg, and Southeast Island school districts to create Alaska Digital Academies.

The grant is intended to provide an online enrollment portal to high-quality interactive courses for middle and high school students taught by highly qualified teachers who are proficient in distance technology and who understand alternative forms of education. Students will have access to teachers throughout the school day, after school hours, and when school is not in session. Students will regularly demonstrate mastery through performance-based assessments, assessments during the unit or course, and end-of-unit or -course assessments. Educators will use student assessment results to support interventions that increase student success.

EED contact: Paul Prussing, Deputy Director of Teaching & Learning Support, 907-465-8721 and paul.prussing@alaska.gov

District Superintendent contacts: Kenai Peninsula, Dr. Steve Atwater, 907-714-8888; Copper River, Dr. Michael Johnson, 907-822-3234; Kodiak, Stewart McDonald, 907-481-6200; and Ketchikan, Robert Boyle, 907-225-2118.

###

