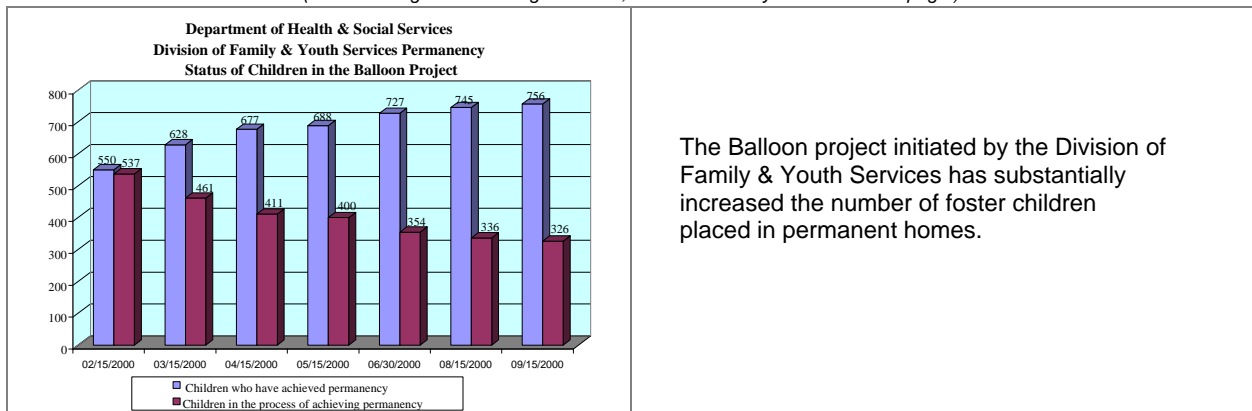


Governor's Priorities: Children and Education

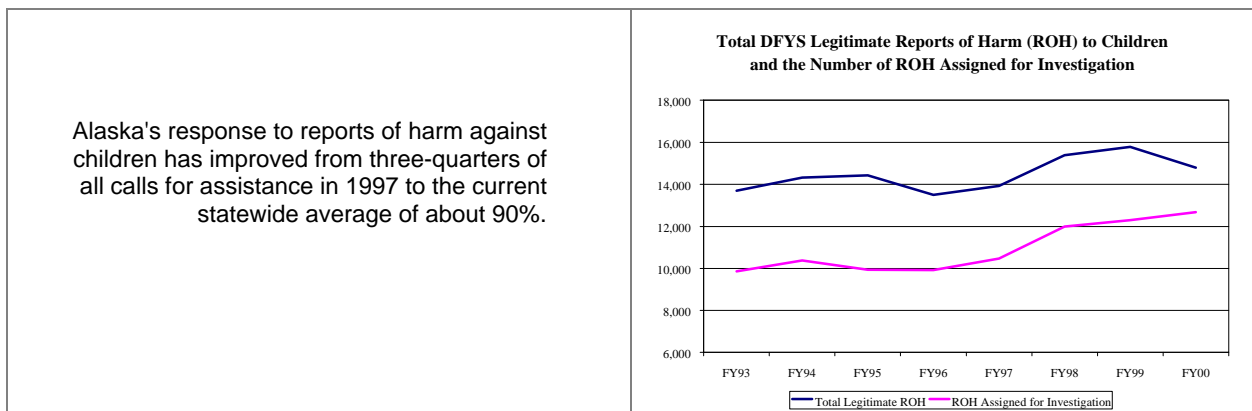
Desired Result: Safe, healthy children who are well prepared for the future.

KEY BASELINE INDICATORS FOR CHILDREN AND EDUCATION:

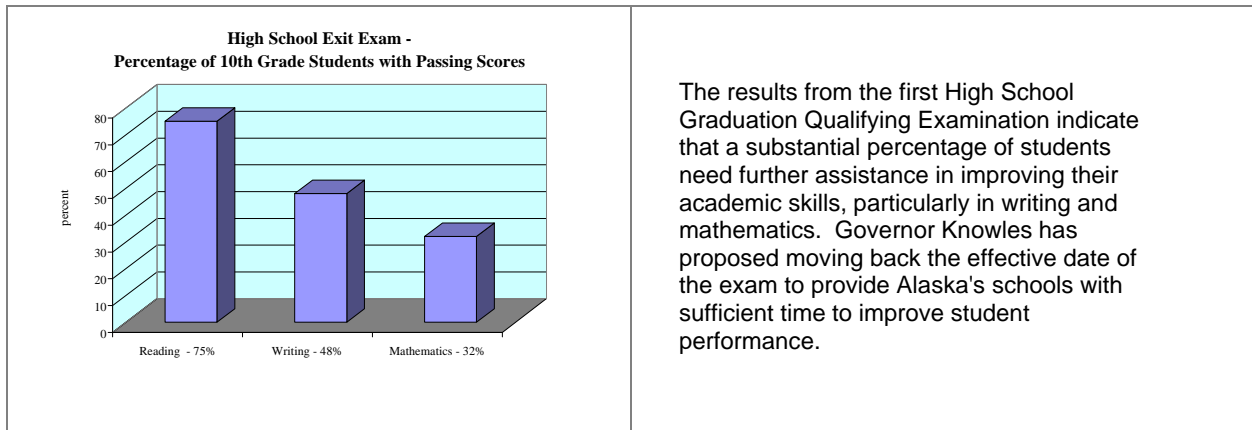
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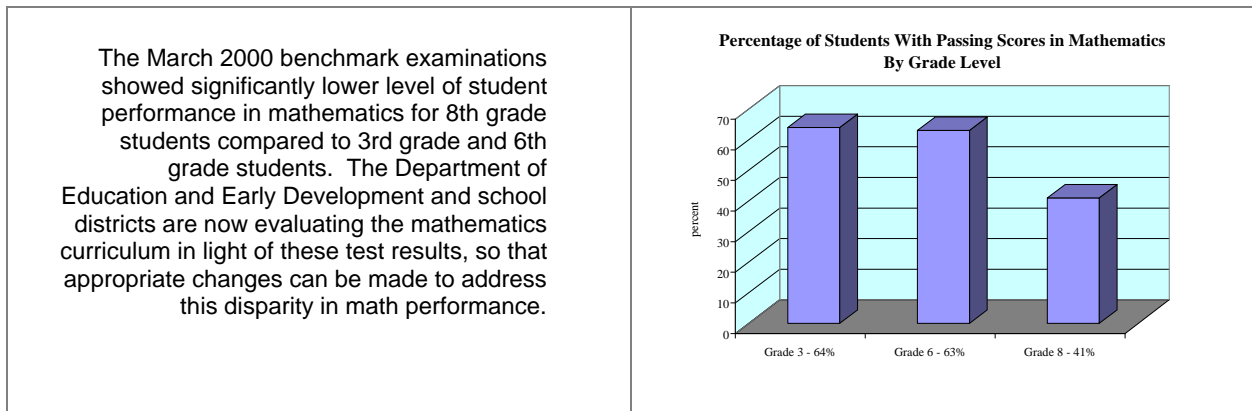
The Balloon project initiated by the Division of Family & Youth Services has substantially increased the number of foster children placed in permanent homes.



Alaska's response to reports of harm against children has improved from three-quarters of all calls for assistance in 1997 to the current statewide average of about 90%.



The results from the first High School Graduation Qualifying Examination indicate that a substantial percentage of students need further assistance in improving their academic skills, particularly in writing and mathematics. Governor Knowles has proposed moving back the effective date of the exam to provide Alaska's schools with sufficient time to improve student performance.



GOALS AND STRATEGIES:

1. Improve child health and development so children and their families are healthy.

- Increase the percentage of children who are fully immunized by age two.
- Expand health care coverage to the children and pregnant women of Alaska's working families.
- Reduce waiting lists for families in need of diagnostic and treatment services for the developmentally disabled.
- Eliminate the waiting list for infants and toddlers who need therapies and early intervention services.
- Prevent alcohol-related birth defects and help those born with fetal alcohol syndrome/effects be as successful as possible.

2. Protect children and help them move from risk to opportunity.

- Expand and reallocate resources to protect, support, and treat children who are victims of physical or sexual abuse or neglect.
- Encourage and support families to participate in their children's development through parent training and quality schools initiatives.
- Increase alcohol and drug prevention and treatment programs available for youth.
- Authorize communities to handle less serious offenses through community courts or youth courts.
- Increase the number of licensed child care facilities.

- Continue effective youth development programs such as the Alaska Military Youth Academy (formerly called the National Guard Youth Corps ChalleNGe).

3. Break the cycle of abuse and neglect through strong families and safe communities.

- Expand successful early childhood education programs like Head Start and home-visit programs to help break the cycle of child abuse and neglect.
- Work with and promote the Alaska Children's Trust so communities have access to additional resources for the prevention of child abuse, neglect and family violence.
- Speed up the adoption process and increase support for foster families.
- Increase drug and alcohol treatment opportunities for adults with children.

4. Improve schools so children succeed and are well prepared to enter the work force.

- Build on recent initiatives to improve the quality of Alaska's schools, including mandatory standards in the basic skills, fair and timely testing, and assistance for students who need it.
- Promote the Alaska Education Summit 2000 recommendations and work with school teams to help improve student learning.
- Implement a financially responsible plan that provides a long-term, stable source of funding for school construction and major maintenance statewide.
- Promote fair and equitable funding of education to make sure all students have the chance to succeed.

5. Improve economic capacity so families and their children are financially secure.

- Increase child care funding to expand access to quality, affordable child care so families are supported while they work and children are cared for in safe, nurturing environments.
- Continue moving Alaskans from welfare into jobs so they can support their families.
- Ensure child support enforcement is strong and fair.

6. Increase the public's awareness of children's well being and needs so citizens know what they can do to support children.

- Continue to deliver an annual State of the Child Address highlighting children's issues.
- Develop a blueprint to monitor how well children are faring based on indicators such as education, health and safety, economic well being, crime and violent death.
- Maintain effective recruitment and retention campaigns for child care and foster care providers and increase the number of providers in Alaska.

Highlights of progress in 2000

- Continued to implement the "Smart Start for Alaska's Children" plan to expand children's health care, break the cycle of abuse and neglect, and intervene when kids are in peril.
- Implemented a landmark child-protection bill that allows quicker intervention for children in peril.
- Launched the Denali KidCare program, which since March 1999 successfully expanded health care coverage to about 15,000 more children and 2,000 more pregnant women in Alaska's working families.
- Put more child protection workers on the street to help us intervene swiftly and forcefully when children are in danger.
- Improved Alaska's response to reports of harm against children from three-quarters of all calls for assistance in 1997 to the current statewide average of about 90%.

- ☑ Moved about 700 children who had been lingering in foster care more than three years into permanent adoptive homes.
- ☑ Implemented a comprehensive program to prevent alcohol-related birth defects and to help those with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) be as successful as possible.
- ☑ Made fourth-year grants from the Alaska Children's Trust for prevention of child abuse and neglect, distributing \$308,000 to 19 community-initiated programs.
- ☑ Continued raising money for the Children's Trust from businesses and individual Alaskans, increasing the Trust principal to nearly \$10 million.
- ☑ Continued the "Foster A Future" public awareness campaign and recruited about 100 more foster parents in Alaska.
- ☑ Implemented the second phase of the Quality Schools initiative: mandatory academic standards in reading, writing and math; frequent and meaningful testing to make sure students are on track to graduate; and accountability for low-performing schools.
- ☑ Added 78 detention and treatment beds in juvenile facilities across Alaska, so family and friends are involved in treatment, making rehabilitation more likely.
- ☑ Secured funding to construct six new schools in rural Alaska.

The Children's Cabinet

In 1995, Governor Knowles appointed a Children's Cabinet of top state officials to coordinate and advance priorities for children and families. The members are:

- Commissioner of Education and Early Development
- Commissioner of Health and Social Services
- Attorney General
- Commissioner of Public Safety
- Commissioner of Corrections
- Director of the Office of Management and Budget
- Lieutenant Governor

For more information about the Children's Cabinet, contact the Department of Education and Early Development at (907) 465-2800