



## Alternative Learning Department Year End Update

This report provides a review of department efforts at the close of the 2017-18 school year, and what is on the radar for the 2018-19 school year.

The Alternative Learning Department (ALD) is committed to being transparent in our efforts and engaging stakeholders to better serve Washington school districts, schools, and students.

The ALD specifically supports Alternative Learning Experiences (ALE), Online Learning, as well as providing a point of contact for the many different learning options available in Washington state.

[Please provide us feedback!](#) How did the department serve you and how can improve our customer service or feedback on resources or information you need?

If you have questions about the ALD or this report, visit our website at <http://www.k12.wa.us/ALD/> or contact us at [ALDInfo@k12.wa.us](mailto:ALDInfo@k12.wa.us).

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## 2017-18 Year in Review

### Priorities

#### Staffing

The Alternative Learning Department experienced some growth in 2017-18. We look forward to providing robust support for alternative learning. Current staffing is:

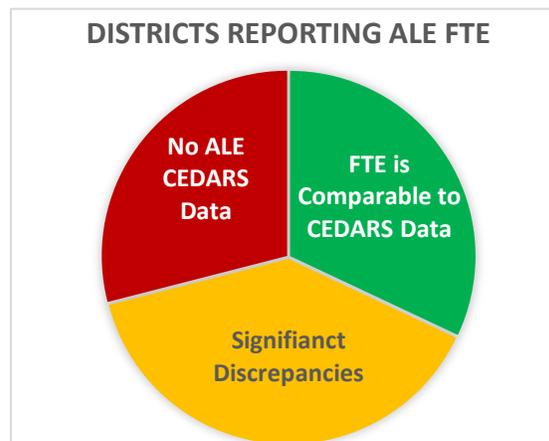
- **ALE Program Manager, Anissa Sharratt**  
This role provides leadership, support and technical assistance specific to ALE.
- **Online Learning Program Specialist, Nicole Gonzalez**  
This role provides support and technical assistance around online learning, and online provider approval.
- **ALE/Reengagement Compliance Manager, Liz Quayle**  
This role provides support, guidance, and technical assistance specifically around compliance to public education expectations.
- **School Choice and Enrollment Options Manager, Joy Walton Kawasaki**  
This new role provides a point of contact and resource for the many different public learning options available in Washington and how students can access them.
- **ALD Director, Rhett Nelson**  
This role provides leadership and support for ALE, Online Learning, and School Choice.

#### Finalizing Transition of the Department to OSPI

The website was the final element of the transition. The previous Digital Learning Department website was hosted by the University of Washington, a carryover from its previous incarnation as the non-profit organization, the Digital Learning Commons. The new location of the website, like the move into Olympia, solidifies the department's integration into OSPI.

#### Data and Reporting

The [two performance audits](#) conducted by the State Auditor's Office highlighted the poor data quality associated with ALE. Based on initial data reviews, 29% of districts reporting ALE enrollment did not report any ALE data to CEDARS. The department has focused attention on this issue resulting in a statute change, increased communications, and a work group identifying barriers to reporting and possible solutions. The department will continue to prioritize improving data quality. See our video about [ALE data reporting](#) on our website!



## Updates to Rules and Laws

Updates to rules that impact ALE can be found on the [ALE website](#).

### Full-Day Kindergarten

Statewide implementation of full-day kindergarten began in fall 2017 per [RCW 28A.150.315](#). [WAC 392-121-182](#) required updates to address the provisions of this law in the ALE setting.

The department:

1. Filed emergency rules in September 2017.
2. Collected feedback from ALE programs and other key stakeholders through workshops, surveys, workgroups, and site visits.
3. Submitted a final WAC revision effective for the 2018-2019 school year.
4. Developed guidance which can be found on the [ALE website](#).

Thank you to the Early Learning Department, and all those who participated in the process or provided feedback.

### ALE Course Types

[Senate Bill 6134 \(2018\)](#) updated the definitions for “remote” and “site-based” ALE course types. These new definitions are intended to make reporting easier, as well as more clearly identify students in courses where there is little to no in-person instruction. Read [this Bulletin](#) addressing this change.

### Attendance and Truancy

[Second Substitute House Bill 1170 \(2SHB 1170\)](#) was passed into law following the 2017 Legislative Session, amending Washington’s attendance and truancy laws ([RCW 28A.225](#)). In addition, the bill tasked OSPI with creating rules for a uniform and consistent definition of truancy in ALE settings and for establishing procedures for addressing truancy. Over the course of the 2017-18 school year, OSPI has been exploring potential definitions through a process of information gathering during the fall WALA workshops and engaging in discussions with workgroups and stakeholders. This is ongoing work and no new rules are in place at this time.

### Assessment Accountability for Part Time Students

The department proposed modifying the ALE rules (WAC 392-121-182) to address the accountability of schools serving part-time students. Based on stakeholder feedback, the department declined to continue pursuing this rule revision.

## Communications

2017-18 was a year focused on strengthening communications with the field through in-person conversations, timely phone and email communication, regular monthly newsletters, a new website, and offering webinars and videos. Most of these are available on the [ALD website](#). Highlights include:

- Monthly newsletters detailing relevant news impacting ALE and upcoming events. [Sign up](#) here.
- Six webinars and three videos were conducted and recordings are available.
- The department participated and presented at ten conferences and events over the course of the year. Copies of presentations are available on request.

## Online Learning

The move to the new website required reformatting of information.

- Guidance was consolidated into the [Guide to Online Learning](#).
- The [course catalog](#) was updated with information about course offerings and links to the provider's website for more detailed information.
- Information about [approved course providers](#) and [approved school programs](#) was reformatted to pdf documents.

One new online course provider, Pearson Online and Blended Learning, was approved beginning the 2018-19 school year. Districts interested in contracting with them, or any other approved online provider, would need to ensure it aligns with district policy and state requirements for [online learning](#) and [contracted instruction](#).

## ALE and Open Doors Compliance Reviews

For this school year, the compliance manager role focused on 3 areas:

1. Develop a [compliance self-study tool](#) for local evaluation and pre-audit review.
2. Provide technical assistance and guidance around documentation, reporting, and broader public education requirements.
3. Conduct individual comprehensive program reviews both on-site and through desk review.

### Program reviews

As of June, 12 ALE and 19 Reengagement programs were reviewed this school year as of June. Programs were reviewed based prior compliance findings, program requests, and new programs with no review history.

Program strengths included clear and ordered forms for documentation, centralized and accessible documents, and evidence of frequent opportunities for students to demonstrate progress.

### Common errors

ALE	Open Doors Reengagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Choice Transfers not in place</li><li>• Estimate hours and FTE did not match</li><li>• Beginning and Ending Dates did not match enrollment</li><li>• Written Student Learning Plan lacked course codes, certificated teacher information</li><li>• Monthly progress reports were insufficient</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Choice Transfer not in place</li><li>• Indicator of Academic Progress not met within 3 months</li><li>• Students not eligible because of age (not 16 by September 1)</li><li>• Records not kept in same place, or inaccessible to staff.</li></ul>

## School Choice and Enrollment Options

In 2016-17 more than 50,000 Washington students participated in learning options outside of their resident school district. With the list of options growing, OSPI has devoted resources including staffing to better support schools, students and families. The first year of this work has identified ways to improve the standard choice transfer form, as well as a need for a more accessible Learning by Choice manual. Please stay tuned next year!

## 2018-19 What to Watch For

### Attendance and Truancy in ALE

The attendance/truancy efforts described in the 2018-19 review will continue next year with the goal of proposing language to define absences and truancy in ALE settings in addition to establishing procedures for addressing truancy. Ideally these procedures will leverage the existing systems to facilitate truancy actions between school districts and courts when the student is receiving their education in a non-resident district.

### Collaboration

#### Washington School Counselor Association (WSCA)

Initiated in the 2017-18 school year, the Alternative Learning Department plans to continue building its partnership with WSCA. We hope to collaborate with WSCA to facilitate surveys and discussions with School Counselors across the state on challenges and supports related to Alternative Learning.

#### Washington Association of Learning Alternatives (WALA)

The ALD and WALA share common goals for supporting alternative models of learning to meet the needs of all students. We will continue to partner with WALA where we can to ensure that alternative programs continue to be innovative, dynamic, engaging, and meeting the expectations of public education.

#### Online Learning Advisory Committee (OLAC)

This legislatively mandated committee provides advice on online learning approval, guidance, website, and other areas related to online learning. The committee has a formal membership that participates in committees meetings and communications and feedback in-between. Committee meetings are open to the public and participation is welcome. More information and the schedule for these meetings can be found on the [OLAC website](#).

#### Alternative Learning Experience Advisory Committee

This new committee, along with OLAC, advises on program needs and the impact of rules and guidance, prior to broader stakeholder communication, or more intensive ad-hoc work groups. Membership is limited but meeting overview and agendas will be provided by request.

#### Career and Technical Education (CTE)

The 2018 legislature tasked OSPI to create recommendations for providing enhanced CTE funding in ALE. The ALD and CTE department are working together with ALE and CTE stakeholders to develop these recommendations by December 15, 2018.

#### Ad-Hoc Work Groups

Every good idea needs a small group to develop a more cohesive plan. Ad-hoc work groups are, as the name implies, temporary and designed to address a specific task. Examples from 2017-18 include a groups to deliver ALE recommendations for Full-Day Kindergarten, truancy, information systems, and CTE. If you would like to participate in an Ad-Hoc work group, we will be sending out requests through the ALE website and newsletters as needed.

## ALE Guidance Development

Efforts to review out-of-date guidance have been and continue to be ongoing. A number of documents were reviewed and posted to the Alternative Learning Department [website](#) and we continue to develop new guidance based on priorities identified by the field. Guidance development in 2018-19 will tentatively include full-day kindergarten, substantially similar practices, serving students with disabilities, and CEDARS reporting. We continue to value your [feedback](#) on guidance needs.

## New ALE Program Support

Navigating the complexity of alternative learning can be challenging for new staff and/or schools interested in offering ALE courses for the first time. We hope to alleviate some of those challenges by building guidance and considerations for new programs in addition to increased support for educators new to ALE. If you have resources you find helpful in training new staff and would like to share them, please contact Anissa Sharratt at [Anissa.Sharratt@k12.wa.us](mailto:Anissa.Sharratt@k12.wa.us).

## ALE Program Visits

We want to visit you! One of our priorities in 2018-19 will be to strengthen our outreach and knowledge base of ALE programs/schools across the state. We want to learn more about the models, strengths, needs, and students of individual programs statewide. We may be asking programs to host representatives from the Alternative Learning Department and are also seeking programs interested in hosting a visit. The intent of these visits will include a focus on listening and learning, not on compliance. If you are interested in hosting a visit or would like more information, please contact Anissa Sharratt at [Anissa.Sharratt@k12.wa.us](mailto:Anissa.Sharratt@k12.wa.us).

## Full-Day Kindergarten Follow-Up

With new FDK rules in effect next school year, the department wants to ensure programs have the tools they need for successful implementation. The OSPI Early Learning Department in collaboration with the Alternative Learning Department will be reaching out to programs claiming FDK enrollment to ensure communication around the new rules, ensure WaKIDS is implemented with fidelity, and to identify promising practices and areas of need.

## Choice Transfer Updates

The ALD is working with the Information Technology division and Customer Support department to improve the functionality of the standard choice transfer system in Education Data Systems (EDS). In the long term improvements may include some additional training opportunities and improved guidance around policy, procedure, timelines, denials, appeals, and rescindments.

## ALE and Open Doors Compliance Reviews

For 2018-19, reviews will focus on programs with discrepancies from the previous review cycle, new programs, and requests for review. A fall schedule of regional workshops will provide further compliance education. A Comprehensive Program Self-Study is available and will be introduced in these workshops.

Programs seeking a voluntary or pre-audit review may request one by emailing Liz Quayle at [Liz.Quayle@k12.wa.us](mailto:Liz.Quayle@k12.wa.us).

## Feedback and Continuous Improvement

Provide us feedback on our [website and supports](#), or our [customer service](#). Help us help support you!