



# Anchorage School District

## Education Center

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March 19, 2015

Representative Wes Keller  
Alaska House of Representatives  
Alaska Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Chairman Keller:

HB 102 is before the House Education Committee tomorrow. We understand there have been questions from Committee members regarding Anchorage School District's (ASD) programs supporting students in residential treatment facilities. We appreciate the opportunity to present information to the Committee on this subject.

The Anchorage School District provides educational programs to students admitted to eight long and short-term residential treatment centers. Students are primarily referred for placement in these community locations by outside agencies, parents, Office of Children's Services or Department of Juvenile Justice. Some of the students in the residential treatment centers reside in Anchorage and attended ASD schools, while others come from other Alaska communities. The students in the residential programs are admitted for many reasons, but most are in crisis and are having significant behavioral concerns thus presenting a unique and challenging educational task. The average stay for a short-term placement is about 30 days. In the long-term facilities, students stay up to a year or more.

Currently, there are 181 students among the eight programs with 40-50 identified as students with disabilities. Most of the educational support that ASD provides for these students is incorporated in a program called Special Schools. This is a program within the larger Whaley Center program that supports several hundred other students, most with IEPs, at other ASD facilities. The Special Schools staff is made up of fourteen ASD teacher positions and seven ASD teacher assistant positions. In addition, the Special Schools program draws administrative, instructional and technical support from the Whaley Center, districtwide ASD special education resources and ASD program leadership. Teachers assigned to Special Schools meet the same certification requirements as regular and special education teachers in other schools within the district.

ASD students admitted to an Anchorage residential program are dually enrolled in their current ASD school and the residential program. Students arriving from out of district are immediately enrolled into ASD. The ASD teacher contacts the student's resident district/sending school to share and receive information about the student's educational needs. Students with disabilities in short term facilities continue to have their IEP case-managed and monitored by their neighborhood school in cooperation with the Special Schools staff. This insures consistency for

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their continued education once they are released from residential treatment. Students in the long-term facilities have their IEPs case managed by the ASD special education teachers on staff.

In all cases, the students' health and well-being is the number one ASD priority. Instructional activity is tailored to the treatment needs of each student. With that priority in mind, regular and special education instruction is provided for grades K-12. Instruction is presented in a variety of ways including individual, small group, and computer-based instruction. Credit courses are available through APEX for secondary students, allowing them to continue their academic studies and receive credits toward graduation. Current educational practices include direct instruction, supplemental materials including Skills Tutor, Achieve 3000, and other texts that support instruction, as well on-line courses through APEX. In addition, replacement assignments are made available to students who may need their work accommodated or modified to support their learning. Students may also be transported to another ASD school for some or all of their instruction.

An important component to educational success for students in residential facilities is the coordination, collaboration and cooperation between ASD and the residential treatment programs. All ASD staff assigned to Special Schools are expected to collaborate with facility staff to plan and execute the educational support for students at those facilities. This effort is led by the Special Schools department chair who visits each facility regularly to support staff, obtain resources and resolve concerns.

As we strive to improve outcomes for students, we understand the unique challenges of supporting students in residential programs while maintaining high expectations for rigor and integrity. To this end, the district is continuing collaborative conversations with the residential treatment facilities and reviewing both our academic and social emotional learning programs for students. The district is committed to working with each program to positively impact student learning and impact outcomes.

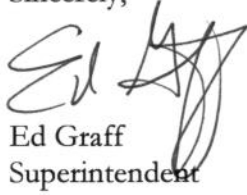
Some specific targets for the coming year include increasing communication between residential treatment programs' administration, liaisons and ASD administration. By establishing a regular meeting schedule for the year to include quarterly meetings between ASD and special school administration, educational programming, staffing and professional development opportunities, as well as issues around curriculum materials and instructional practices could be discussed and addressed collaboratively.

Another focus area would be to review our current model of support to enhance delivery through direct instruction in the content areas while infusing social emotional learning skills. Joint meetings with ASD teaching staff and residential support staff would also be held to provide opportunities for professional development around this model. Increasing our emphasis on direct instruction when appropriate and monitoring students' learning more closely would be a widely held expectation.

By working together in these areas, we can provide educational programming that meets students where they are, keeps them on track, and insures continuity with the programming that they will be transitioned back to in their neighborhood school.

We appreciate the opportunity to describe our program to support students in residential treatment facilities. Please feel free to contact me or ASD Chief Academic Officer Mike Graham if you have any questions regarding these programs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed Graff', with a stylized, overlapping flourish to the right.

Ed Graff  
Superintendent

cc: Members, House Education Committee  
Commissioner Mike Hanley