

Helen Phillips

From: Linda Wynalda <lwaldo@gci.net>
Sent: Saturday, April 02, 2016 12:40 AM
To: House Finance Legislation
Cc: Jane Pierson; Rep. Charisse Millett
Subject: Vote No on HB 102

Hello, My name is Linda Wynalda. I have provided special education services to students in the Lower Yukon School District, as well as special education services in the Anchorage School District. I have also taught in general education classes for ten years in Mears Middle School. In the past nine years, I have worked in the ASD classrooms of North Star Hospital, Booth and AK Child and Family. I currently work on the Jesse Lee campus.

It is my understanding this committee is determining if education funds should be paid to residential psychiatric treatment agencies. The agencies would use the funds to provide an appropriate education for their clients through district contracts or charter schools. I believe this bill is unnecessary, and I ask that you do not pass this bill. I believe the Anchorage School District already provides an appropriate education and adapts for the mental health needs of each student in the classroom. I am writing to tell you what occurs in the treatment program I work with and what changes have taken place in the last year in the Special Schools Department of the Anchorage School District.

There are two classrooms on the Jesse Lee campus. Upon admittance to the treatment program, the agency team determines if the student will attend classes on campus or at the neighborhood school. ASD has no input into this decision.

The student is enrolled. Depending on the students' needs, classes are scheduled and academic content is usually delivered via the computer. This year, ASD has hired a fulltime counselor to ensure students in treatment are enrolled in the correct classes, and she transcribes out-of-district credits into ASD credits. There are 91 courses high school students have available to them through our APEX curriculum. Students are scheduled in the core classes required for graduation first. Elective classes are available if the core requirements have been met. The goal for each student is to earn at least three credits per semester; some students may even earn additional credits. Three credits per semester is the expectation of all high school students in any ASD school. At my facility, AK Child and Family staff teach the physical education and health classes. I teach, facilitate and coach students through the required academic content delivered via computer. The agency provides one staff person in the classroom for behavior support.

Since I work with high school students, I also have students use the Alaska Career Information System (AKCIS). They take the inventories, map out a plan for their future goals, and explore colleges or training programs. This resource is particularly helpful to remind students treatment is a stepping stone for a healthy future.

Students who have a current IEP receive the services indicated on the IEP unless those services conflict with the treatment program. I have had one student who received speech and language services. A district speech therapist came once per week to deliver the services indicated on the IEP. Accommodations, direct instruction or alternate assignments may be needed for some of the students receiving special education services. Quarterly progress reports, annual reviews and if needed, three-year reevaluations are all part of the special education process in the treatment facility. Occasionally, the agency has testing results ASD may use with parent

permission and a signed release of information to help develop an IEP if the student has shown a history of learning difficulties.

I have never had more than 13 students in my classroom. I get to know my students very well and individualize for anyone who needs additional help or enrichment whether they have an IEP or not.

In the past nine years, education in the residential or acute care facility has always been secondary to treatment. Some of the examples that treatment has come first are these:

School hours are determined by the facility

Consultation with the agency staff before any consequences/rewards for behavior are given

Students do not go on educational field trips

Homework is not part of the daily schedule

Medical appointments are scheduled during school hours

Books and magazines are censored or vetted before students may read them

Family Therapy pullouts during school hours

Div. of Voc. rehab services have been deferred/denied due to treatment constraints.

This year, additional teachers, a full time counselor, an accessible office and new computers are all contributing to a strong education program in the treatment centers. I hope the finance committee recognizes the Anchorage School District is committed to educating every student appropriately. I have given you a glimpse of what ASD provides to students in the residential treatment programs I've worked in. Please let us continue to build on the foundation started this year.

Do not pass HB 102 Thanks for your time. Linda Wynalda, ASD Special Education Teacher