

# Alaska State Legislature

**Senate Majority Leader**

Judiciary Committee

Chairman

In-State Energy Committee

Co-Chair

State Affairs Committee

Joint Armed Services Committee

Legislative Council

Rules Committee



**Senator John Coghill**

Session Address:  
State Capitol, Room 119  
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## SB 113 Boarding School Stipends SPONSOR STATEMENT

SB 13 would raise the stipend rate for statewide secondary residential programs based on five regional rates to better reflect the cost of operating a boarding school. Boarding schools offer students who don't have access to grades 9 to 12 an alternative to being homeschooled and gives students in smaller high schools the opportunity to attend a school that offers extracurricular activities available in larger schools like sports, band and art.

In 2013 the legislature passed SB 47 which lifted the limit on boarding schools and expanded the program to magnet schools that are for shorter periods but focus on training programs.

A per-pupil stipend helps pay for the students' monthly residential care, which includes meals and supervision 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

**SENATE BILL NO. 113**

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA  
TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

**BY SENATOR COGHILL**

**Introduced: 1/22/14**  
**Referred: Education, Finance**

**A BILL**

**FOR AN ACT ENTITLED**

1   **"An Act increasing the stipend for boarding school students; and providing for an**  
2   **effective date."**

3   **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

4       **\* Section 1.** AS 14.16.200(b) is amended to read:

5               (b) Costs that may be claimed by a district for reimbursement under (a) of this  
6       section are

7                       (1) one round trip on the least expensive means of transportation  
8       between the student's community of residence and the school during the school year if  
9       the district expends money for the trip; and

10                      (2) a per-pupil monthly stipend to cover room and board expenses as  
11       determined by the department on a regional basis and not to exceed the following  
12       amounts:

13                                       (A) for the Southeast Region (Region I), \$1,230 [\$820];  
14                                       (B) for the Southcentral Region (Region II), \$1,200 [\$800];

- 1 (C) for the Interior Region (Region III), \$1,452 [\$968];  
2 (D) for the Southwest Region (Region IV), \$1,509 [\$1,006];  
3 (E) for the Northern Remote Region (Region V), \$1,776  
4 [\$1,184].  
5 \* **Sec. 2.** This Act takes effect July 1, 2014.



March, 11, 2013

Senator John Coghill  
State Capitol Room 119  
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senator Coghill:

I'm writing on behalf of the North Slope Leadership Team to express strong support for SB 47.

Our Mayor, Charlotte Brower, and the executive leaders of the North Slope Borough School District, Ilisagvik College, Arctic Slope Native Association, and Arctic Slope Regional Corporation are working together to find ways to better prepare our students and adults for successful post-high school education and workforce preparation.

We are currently meeting with residents of all North Slope villages to present the idea of a residential learning center located in Barrow and to gain their feedback and support for such a program. A residential learning center, as proposed in SB 47, could deliver advanced academics and career and technical education courses to students in our small village high schools that they cannot presently access.

Sincerely yours,

Jacob Adams,  
Chief Administrative Officer  
North Slope Borough

March 11, 2013

The Honorable John Coghill  
Alaska State Senate  
State Capitol Room 119  
Juneau AK, 99801

Dear Senator Coghill:

School districts have developed a diverse array of partnerships and programs to meet the needs of Alaskan students across the state, whose academic achievement gaps place Alaska at the bottom of the graduation rates nationwide. Some districts have developed successful traditional residential programs that welcome students from across Alaska. Other districts have developed innovative district-wide programs that utilize a variable length school year to keep students connected and involved in their home communities, families and schools. Meeting the needs of all Alaskans is a complex challenge. Meeting the challenge requires diverse and creative solutions.

Unfortunately, AS 14.16.200, the statute authorizing residential educational programs, as currently written is too specific to support creative solutions. Like the delegates of the Alaska Federation of Natives, CITC supports changes to AS 14.16.200 to provide a more flexible framework for residential education in Alaska. In addition, all districts have found the stipend levels currently authorized, to be woefully insufficient. Specifically, CITC supports SB 47, amending AS 14.16.200 to:

- Allow school districts delivering district-wide residential programs to be eligible for student stipend funding.
- Allow eligible programs to utilize a variable length school year to enable students to split the school year between in a residential program in an urban area or a district hub and their village school. This change will allow students to access an exemplary education and maintain their connections to their families, homes and communities.
- Support local partnerships between school districts and Alaska Native and non-profit organizations to provide supportive residential experiences for students.
- Increase the amount of the boarding stipend.

AFN's resolution in support of these principals is attached to this letter. We appreciate your introduction of SB 47, and these needed changes to AS 14.16.200.

**Cook Inlet Tribal Council's residential project:**

Through the current stipends, the State is already supporting innovative education models, youth housing, boarding schools and various foster care models. CITC has launched the Dena'ina Academy, which is a residential educational program that provides a public/private partnership model that may also be replicated throughout the state.

Dena'ina Academy is a partnership between CITC and the Anchorage School district. In this partnership, CITC will provide the room, board and residential program components, while Anchorage School District will continue to provide the academic and other extracurricular programs to the students. The infrastructure offered by the ASD and the partnership with CITC provide a strong foundation for the success of the residential program in support of the academic success of the students.

Dena'ina Academy is designed as a culture-based leadership program to provide room and board, social and academic supports for the students. The students will live, study and play in a cohort. Live-in advisors, elders, tutors and mentors will ensure an environment that promotes and supports holistic student development, including positive identity development, academic competence, confidence, cultural and community connection and expectations for community service, and Alaska Native cultural activities, sport and music.

**Fundamental Benefits of Funding Dena'ina Academy Operations**

- The high school drop-out rate leads to disproportionate consumption of State resources. Dena'ina Academy graduates will become contributors to the state economy.
- Dena'ina Academy operational funding need not be added to the State's overall funding. By creatively combining and realigning various funding sources, such as those from boarding home and boarding school, foster care, low-income housing, Chafee, transitional housing and homeless, it would make sustainability for the project a reality.
- Tribal and non-profit funding sources leverage state funds to create effective public/private partnerships.
- Given the statewide education issues that Anchorage faces in responding to rural education gaps, Dena'ina Academy offers an effective and cost-efficient solution.

The proposed changes to AS 14.16.200 contained in SB 47 will allow existing programs to expand and increase the number of programs offering creative solutions to Alaska's educational challenges, such as Dena'ina Academy and those currently under design in Kotzebue and Barrow. SB 47 will enable communities to offer more opportunity to students and contribute to closing the achievement gap. We strongly support SB 47.

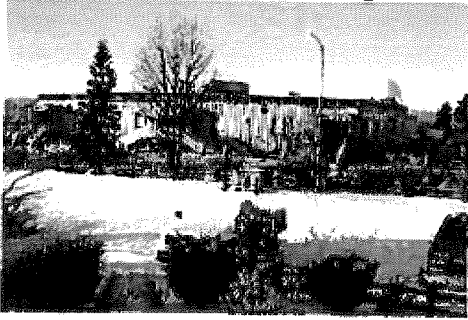
Thank you for your leadership and attention to this important educational component that will provide real outcomes for our youth.

Sincerely,

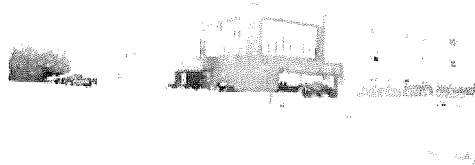


Gloria O'Neill  
President/CEO

## Galena Interior Learning Academy



Two Seasons Dining Hall



Ptarmigan Hall

### Residence Life Revenues and Expenditures

	Actual FY 11 based on 175 Students	Actual FY 12 based on 175 Students	Estimated FY 13 based on 210 Students
<b>Revenue</b>			
Statewide Residential Educational Program	1,027,543.00	1,963,010.00	2,431,760.00
Pension System on Behalf Res Hall	87,644.00	144,079.00	149,897.00
Pension System on Behalf Dining Hall	15,687.00	15,687.00	15,687.00
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>1,130,874.00</b>	<b>2,122,776.00</b>	<b>2,597,344.00</b>
<b>Total Revenue Per Student</b>	<b>6,462.14</b>	<b>12,130.15</b>	<b>12,368.30</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>			
Salary Wages Benefits for Residence Hall	793,534.02	1,172,700.00	1,136,065.00
Salary Wages Benefits for Dining Hall	526,487.00	519,259.23	526,177.00
Maintenance and Utilities for Residence Hall	520,214.00	531,978.00	540,000.00
Maintenance and Utilities for Dining Hall	224,603.30	347,486.67	400,000.00
Food Services above Federal Food Service Sources	415,126.00	448,184.00	680,000.00
Supplies for Residence Hall	2,075.00	1,454.00	2,000.00
Supplies for Dining Hall	8,865.00	6,130.00	8,000.00
Student Travel	330,859.61	382,636.10	400,000.00
Staff Travel	9,619.46	704.50	500.00
Communications	14,375.97	19,440.63	20,000.00
Residence Stipend-Students	32,460.00	39,800.00	44,400.00
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>2,878,219.36</b>	<b>3,469,773.13</b>	<b>3,757,142.00</b>
<b>Total Expenditures Per Student</b>	<b>16,446.97</b>	<b>19,827.28</b>	<b>17,891.15</b>
<b>Shortage Funding Per Student</b>	<b>9,984.83</b>	<b>7,697.13</b>	<b>5,522.85</b>
<b>Percent Shortage of Funding Per Student</b>	<b>60.71%</b>	<b>38.82%</b>	<b>30.87%</b>

# BOARDING SCHOOL STUDENTS BY HOME TOWN

## Galena Interior Learning Academy

Alakanuk	1	Kipnuk	2	Point Hope	1
Allakaket	2	Kivalina	1	Port Heiden	1
Ambler	3	Kobuk	1	Saint Mary's	1
Anchorage	17	Kodiak	1	Selawik	1
Aniak	2	Koliganek	2	Shaktoolik	3
Anvik	7	Kongiganak	1	Shungnak	2
Beaver	2	Kotlik	4	St. George Island	1
Bethel	12	Kotzebue	7	St. Mary's	4
Buckland	3	Koyuk	4	St. Paul Island	2
Chuathbaluk	1	Kwethluk	3	Stebbins	3
Copper Center	1	Kwigillingok	1	Stevens Village	1
Cordova	1	Manokotak	3	Stoney River	1
Deering	1	Marshall	4	Talkeetna	1
Delta Junction	1	Minto	1	Tanacross	2
Egegik	1	Napakiaik	6	Tanana	1
Elim	1	Newhalen	2	Tok	1
Emmonak	6	Newtok	1	Tuntutuliak	1
Fairbanks	16	Nikolski	1	Tununak	3
Fort Yukon	3	Nome	5	Twin Hills	1
Grayling	4	North Pole	4	Tyonek	3
Holy Cross	1	Northway	3	Unalakleet	1
Hooper Bay	9	Nunapitchuk	7	Wasilla	3
Juneau	1	Palmer	2	White Mountain	1
Kenai	1	Pedro Bay	1	Wrangell	1
Kiana	2	Pilot Station	4		<b>210</b>

## Lower Kuskokwim Learning Academy

## Nenana Student Learning Center

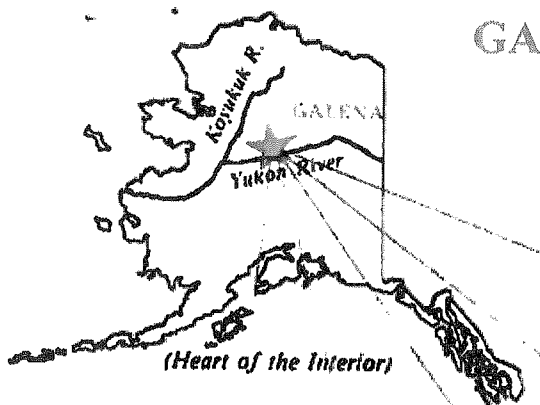
Akiachuk	1	Akiachuk	3	Kongiganak	1
Eek	2	Alakanuk	2	Kwigillingok	2
Goodnews Bay	3	Alekanigik	1	Levelock	1
Hooper Bay	1	Anchorage	5	Minto	2
Kasigluk	2	Anvik	1	Mountain Village	13
Kongiganak	2	Arctic Village	3	Nikolai	2
Kwethluk	1	Bethel	6	Nome	2
Kwigillingok	1	Chalkyitsik	3	North Pole	2
Kwetheluk	5	Dillingham	2	Numan Iqua	2
Mekoryuk	1	Eagle River	1	Nunapitchuk	2
Napaskiak	1	Emmonak	1	Pilot Station	1
Nunapitchuk	3	Fairbanks	4	Point Hope	1
Quinhagak	2	Fort Yukon	1	Ruby	3
Sitka	1	Girdwood	1	Shageluk	3
Toksook Bay	1	Golovin	1	St. Michael	1
Tuntutuliak	2	Hooper Bay	2	Tuluksak	2
Tununak	1	Kaltag	2	Tyonek	5
	<b>30</b>	Kipnuk	3	Venetie	1



# Nenana Student Living Center



	Actual FY2011	Actual FY2012	Budget FY2013
<b>Student Count</b>	77	80	75
<b>Revenue</b>			
Student Stipends	\$ 335,412	\$ 696,960	\$ 653,400
Student Travel	\$ 77,964	\$ 71,481	\$ 71,481
Pension System on-behalf	\$ 37,400	\$ 60,993	\$ 78,472
Total revenue	\$ 450,776	\$ 829,434	\$ 803,353
Revenue per student	\$ 5,854	\$ 10,368	\$ 10,711
<b>Expenditures</b>			
Salaries/Wages/Benefits	\$ 768,539	\$ 911,611	\$ 1,001,522
Other expenses (x-city pymt)	\$ 270,914	\$ 289,079	\$ 241,000
Operations, & Main.	\$ 197,899	\$ 197,920	\$ 195,000
Total expenditures	\$ 1,237,352	\$ 1,398,610	\$ 1,437,522
Expenditure per student	\$ 16,070	\$ 17,483	\$ 19,167
Short fall of funding	\$ (786,576)	\$ (569,176)	\$ (634,169)
<b>Other expenditures</b>			
USDA Loan Payment Obligation	\$ 282,960	\$ 282,960	\$ 282,960
Health Aide			\$ 59,595
<b>Average Student Funding needed:</b>			
for Student Travel	\$ 1,013	\$ 894	\$ 953
for pension on-behalf	\$ 486	\$ 762	\$ 1,046
for all other costs	\$ 18,246	\$ 19,364	\$ 21,735
Total need	\$ 19,745	\$ 21,020	\$ 23,734
<b>Average funding in place</b>			
for Student Travel	\$ 1,013	\$ 894	\$ 953
for pension on-behalf	\$ 486	\$ 762	\$ 1,046
for all other costs	\$ 4,356	\$ 8,712	\$ 8,712
Total funding in place	\$ 5,855	\$ 10,368	\$ 10,711
Shortage funding per student:	\$ (13,890)	\$ (10,652)	\$ (13,023)



## GALENA CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

GALENA, ALASKA 99741  
PHONE (907) 656-1205  
FAX (907) 656-2238

SUPERINTENDENT  
Chris Reitan

December 12, 2012

Re: Sec. 14.16.200 Room and Board Stipend

Dear Senator Coghill;

I'm writing this letter to draw your attention to impending issues regarding Alaska Statute Sec. 14.16.200 State funding for districts operating statewide residential educational programs. At the end of the spring 2011 legislative session the monthly per pupil room and board stipend that a school district can receive for each student housed in a statewide residential educational program was doubled for a two year period. For Galena City School District this legislative action doubled the amount that the district receives per month for each student from \$484 to \$968 for FY 12 and FY 13. Unless additional legislative action is taken to address the per pupil monthly room and board stipend, the stipend will return to the previous funding level of \$484 critically impacting GCSD's boarding school program.

Attached to this letter is a spread sheet that provides a three year analysis of the per pupil monthly room and board stipend. The analysis provides an "Actual" budget of the monies GCSD received per Sec. 14.16.200 and the additional monies that the district allocated to appropriately house and feed each student enrolled in our residential program for FY 11 and FY 12. It also provides an estimated budget for FY 13.

Some additional information that might provide more meaning to the attached spreadsheet is listed below:

- The FY 11 and FY 12 Actual Budgets were based on GCSD being funded up to 175 students in our residential program for monthly per pupil room and board costs.
- In September of 2011 the State Board of Education approved GCSD's request to increase the number of students that GCSD can be reimbursed for from 175 to 210. This adjustment was enacted for FY 13 and GCSD is currently being reimbursed for monthly per pupil room and board costs up to 210 students.

GCSD respectfully requests your support to adjust Sec. 14.16.200 during the spring 2013 legislative session and permanently increase the monthly per pupil room and board stipend to 3X the amount stipulated in Sec. 14.16.200. 3X the amount that is currently stipulated in Sec. 14.16.200 would more adequately provide for the true costs of housing 210 boarding school students. Furthermore, a permanent adjustment to 3X the current stipulated room and board amount would ensure that monies GCSD receives for instructional purposes stay dedicated to instruction and not be used to offset residential costs.

Senator, GCSD thanks you for your previous generous support of high school boarding school programs that provide many rural Alaskan students an alternative education that is unavailable in their home communities. We also thank you in advance for considering this request, and look forward to continued dialogue on this issue.

Yours in Education,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Reitan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Chris" and last name "Reitan" clearly distinguishable.

Chris Reitan, GCSD Superintendent  
Email: [chris.reitan@galenanet.com](mailto:chris.reitan@galenanet.com)

## Dorm Life

### Ptarmigan Hall – Student Housing

Ptarmigan Hall is the student residence hall. Its three stories can accommodate up to 350 students and it allows additional space for lounges, activity rooms, programming, offices, etc.

### Kkuskuno “SUB”

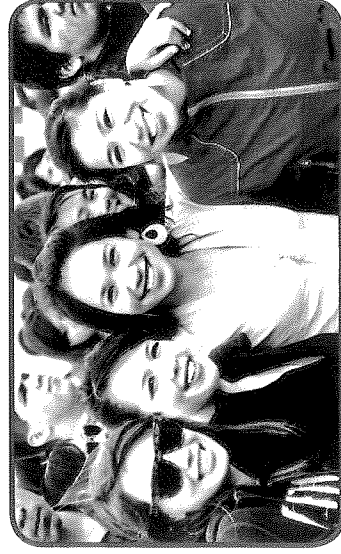
Kkuskuno is the Athabaskan word for “a place to gather.” This building is our student union “SUB.” In the Kkuskuno we have a game room with billiards, air hockey and ping pong tables, the student store, a movie/video game room. We can also host dances and other social programs. The Fireside Lounge within the building offers students a comfortable space to socialize with their peers, and this is where the student store is located.

### Two Seasons Dining Hall

The Two Seasons Dining Hall is home to a highly skilled kitchen staff and chef who prepare three meals a day on school days and two meals a day on non-school days. Unlike regular school cafeteria food, we distinguish our facility as a dining hall due to the selection of fresh fruits, a salad bar, and desserts that accompany the entrees at every meal.

### Gymnasium

The gymnasium, aside from housing classes during the school day, is used largely for student athletic and recreational use in the evenings and on weekends. It houses a three quarter size basketball court, a weight room, two racquetball courts, and a storage room containing snowshoes, ski gear, and other equipment for student use.



## What is GILA?

GILA is a statewide boarding school for students that are seeking yet another choice, and is Alaska's longest operating residential secondary vocational school.

It is an accredited school for grades 9 through 12 and post secondary adult vocational programs. GILA offers students from all over Alaska the opportunity to gain industry standard vocational certification in the following programs:

- Aviation
- Applied Mechanics
- Cosmetology
- Culinary Arts
- Construction Technology
- Health Science
- Computer Science

Any of which, while achieving the academic skills necessary to pass the Alaska High School Graduation Qualifying Exam. Career and Technical Education teachers are hired from industry to support upper level career pathways.

GILA is located in Galena, a rural setting appealing to the lifestyle of the rural students, also allowing those from more urban communities to pursue a more focused emphasis on the individual student.

### GILA's Mission

Active, enthusiastic, and engaging teaching that inspires learning for every student, in every content area, every day.

### GILA's Vision

To provide the highest quality school choice options for families in the state of Alaska.

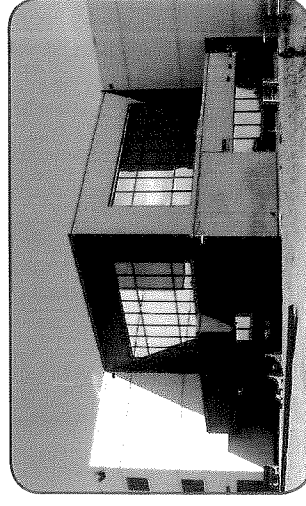


[facebook.com/GILASchool](https://facebook.com/GILASchool)



**G.I.L.A.**  
**Galena Interior Learning Academy**

**Career &  
Technical  
Education**



[enrollment@galenanet.com](mailto:enrollment@galenanet.com)

**907.656.2053**

# Programs Offered

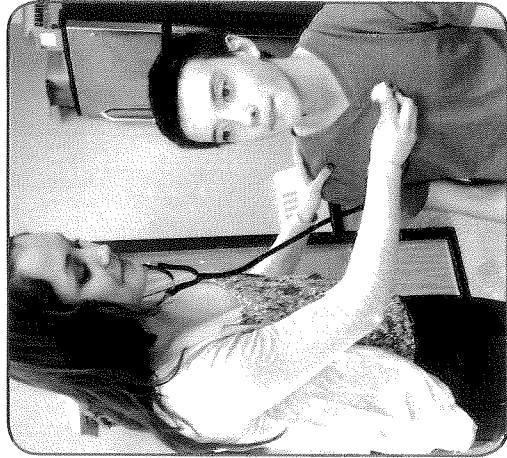
## Aviation

Private Pilot Ground School builds a foundation of knowledge about aviation that is applicable to many aviation related vocations.



## Health Science

Through Health Science courses, students will get a chance to explore career paths in the medical field. With these classes students can prepare for the State of Alaska Certified Nursing Assistant test or use them as a base for other medical field careers.



## Computer Science

Students will start with basic introduction to computers, and from there will have the opportunity to expand their knowledge in classes such as Web Page Design and Video Productions. Through these classes students will have the opportunity to earn college credits while still in high school.

## Applied Mechanics

Courses include an introduction to small engines and auto mechanics. GILAs Applied Mechanics programs have assisted students in future endeavors such as mechanical engineering and careers in the automotive industry.

## Cosmetology

Students in the cosmetology program work towards a license to practice cosmetology in the state of Alaska. In addition, students can work towards certifying themselves in the field of manicuring.

## Culinary Arts

Students in the culinary arts program can receive on-the-job training through our in-house culinary work study program, Food Safety Manager's certification, and Alaska Food Handler Cards.



## Construction Technology

Students are offered classes in carpentry, woodwork-ing, electronics and Auto CAD (computer-aided design software used for drafting, modeling, and architectural drawing) and Welding.

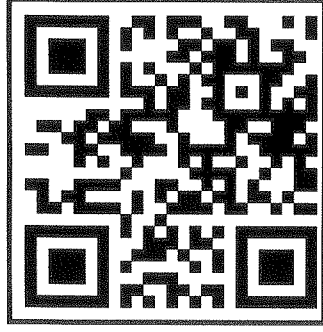


## Want to Join?

It's quick and easy. Visit us online to fill out our convenient registration form to get started today! Otherwise, call or email us with any questions or to enroll by phone.

Register Online!

[enrollment.galenaalaska.org](http://enrollment.galenaalaska.org)



Contact our Enrollment Department:

[enrollment@galenanet.com](mailto:enrollment@galenanet.com)

907.656.2053



ALASKA FEDERATION  
OF NATIVES

## ALASKA FEDERATION OF NATIVES

### 2012 ANNUAL CONVENTION

12-44

- TITLE:** EXPANDING THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR REGIONAL EDUCATION AND LOCAL PROGRAMS
- WHEREAS:** The statewide 2011 Alaska Native high school 4 year graduation rate is 50.07;  
**and**
- WHEREAS:** Of the 131 small high schools, 93 have 30 or fewer students; **and**
- WHEREAS:** Of the 2,662 students in small high schools, 95.38% are Alaska Native students;  
**and**
- WHEREAS:** Almost 1,000 students participate in residential programs of different types throughout the state, and different regions are developing regional programs that fit their needs and circumstance; **and**
- WHEREAS:** State policies have had a negative impact on small high schools and urban schools have very poor performance with regard to Alaska Native students; **and**
- WHEREAS:** Alaska Native students learn in a variety of places, from small rural schools in the villages, to large urban schools in the cities, and distant boarding academies; **and**
- WHEREAS:** Each type of school has its own strengths and weaknesses. Though rural schools often are not provided the same resources as urban schools, they teach things that urban ones do not and they permit our youth to remain with their families and help ensure the continued vitality of our people, our homes, and our cultures; **and**
- WHEREAS:** Regardless of where one attends school, education is the foundation of opportunities for Alaska Natives and for all peoples; **and**
- WHEREAS:** Quality education should therefore be available to all who want it; **and**
- WHEREAS:** Alaska Natives have suffered discrimination and disparities in education, which, as recognized by the courts, has persisted to today; **and**
- WHEREAS:** Several programs throughout the state have had excellent results with short term, medium term and long term programs that connect rural and urban Alaska Native students with opportunities to advance their education; **and**

- WHEREAS The current Alaska law only authorizes statewide residential programs through school districts to be eligible for state residential stipends; and
- WHEREAS: It is essential that Alaska Native organizations operate educational programs for Alaska Native students to advance their opportunities; and
- WHEREAS: The current stipend does not meet the operational cost needs of programs currently under operation; and
- WHEREAS: Residential Learning Centers provide one option and offer the following benefits:
- Student access to short- and long-term courses and programs that small high schools are unable to deliver;
  - State education funding would remain in a student's home district or region.
  - Collaboration on course delivery and cost sharing;
  - Student access to technical centers, university campuses, job shadowing, and apprenticeships;
  - Year-round course delivery;
  - Increased opportunities for Performance Scholarship Program, CTE programs, social and service learning; and

NOW BE IT RESOLVED by the Delegates to the 2012 Annual Convention of the Alaska Federation of Natives, Inc. (AFN), that AFN works with the Governor, his Administration, and the Alaska Legislature to rename 4 AAC 33.090 as follows: District-operated or non-profit operated residential programs that deliver in-district, regional, or statewide residential educational programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that AFN advocate to amend language in 4 AAC 33.090 to include in-district and regional residential educational programs as well as statewide residential educational programs, and that Alaska Native organizations are required to lead or partner with such programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that AFN advocate to amend language in 4 AAC 33.090 to provide student stipend funding to approved in-district and regional residential educational programs; and

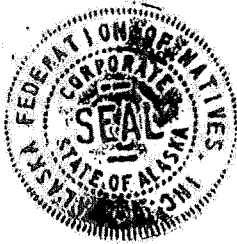
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the State of Alaska establish in regulation an annual application period for districts wishing to establish a district, regional, or statewide residential school in compliance with 4 AAC 33.090; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the current stipend be increased by at least 50% to adequately reflect the costs associated with operating residential programs; and

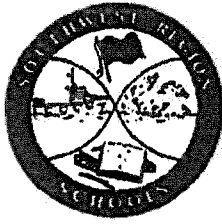
BE IT FINALLY FURTHER RESOLVED that AFN partner with individuals, groups, and other organizations that also believe in educational equality to ensure that Alaska Native Organizations are driving the residential programs for the benefit of Alaska Native students.

SUBMITTED BY: BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF ALASKA FEDERATION OF NATIVES

CONVENTION ACTION: PASSED







## Southwest Region School District

P.O. Box 90  
574 Kenny Wren Road  
Dillingham, AK 99576

(907) 842-5287 • Phone  
(907) 842-5428 • Fax

*Aleknagik*

*Clark's Point*

*Ekwok*

*Koliganek*

*Manokotak*

*New Stuyahok*

*Portage Creek*

*Togiak*

*Twin Hills*

February 27, 2013

Dear Legislator,

Southwest Region School District wishes to thank you for your thoughtful consideration and support of the Alaskan Public Educational System. However, our District and Communities continue to be challenged with declining student population. The District had to close its Portage Creek facilities in 2006. Southwest Region School District closed the Clarks Point School this Fall, as the enrollment for the FY2013 would have been six (6) students, which is below the ten (10) student minimum for State funding. Our William "Sonny" Nelson School in Ekwok continues to teeter just above the student cutoff.

The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development's boarding home program allows school districts to receive reimbursement for the costs of boarding students that qualify for the program. The state has clear definitions about the eligibility of students for the boarding home program.

To meet the state's eligibility requirements, a student must "be a secondary student who does not have daily access to a high school by being transported a reasonable distance." At Southwest Region School District, this definition currently applies to students who live in Aleknagik, Clarks Point, Ekwok, or Twin Hills and are entering the 9th, 10th, 11th, or 12th grades.

Southwest Region School District assists in-district boarding home parents that are hosting students attending any one of our four high schools (Koliganek School, Manokotak 'Nunaniq' School, "Chief" Ivan Blunka School in New Stuyahok, and Togiak School). The boarding home program provides a stipend to the host parents to assist with the costs related to the education and housing of a boarding home student. The boarding home program also provides or reimburses the cost of transportation for one-round trip airfare from the student's home village to the in-district village in which they are attending high school.

With the closure of the Clarks Point School, needs have arisen for parents of elementary age students to seek out alternative educational placements for their children. Presently students from Clarks Point who have enrolled in the District's Ekwok School do not qualify for the State Boarding Home Program. This causes an added financial burden on both the parent(s) and the host family to meet the children's travel, food and lodging needs.

The Southwest Region School District urges the Alaska State Legislature change the language of state statute AS 14.07.030 by removing the specific "secondary" student eligibility criteria to allow elementary age students who have been displaced from a community when a local school has been closed due to enrollment below 10 students to be eligible for state funding through the State Boarding Home Program. A change to this Statute will allow the Department of Education and Early Development to make necessary changes to regulation to address the needs of these displaced elementary age students.

Sincerely yours,

  
David J. Piazza, Superintendent

**SOUTHWEST REGION SCHOOL BOARD**

**RESOLUTION NO. 13-04**

**A RESOLUTION REGARDING SUPPORT FOR ADDITIONAL BOARDING HOME STUDENT ELIGIBILITY**

WHEREAS Southwest Region School District provides educational services to students in a Regional Educational Attendance Area within the communities of Aleknagik (K-8), Clarks Point (K-8), Ekwok (K-8), Koliganek (K-12), Manokotak (K-12), New Stuyahok (K-12), Togiak (K-12), and Twin Hills (K-8);

WHEREAS the families of a significant percentage of the students served by Southwest Region Schools live below the poverty line;

WHEREAS the Clarks Point School was closed at the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year due to an enrollment count below the State supported minimum of ten (10) students;

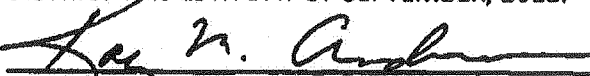
WHEREAS the elementary age students from the community of Clarks Point must secure alternate educational placements during the school year;

WHEREAS parents of elementary age students from Clarks Point who have placed their children in another community's public school and the boarding home host family have increased financial burdens placed upon them meeting the childrens' transportation, food, and lodging needs;

WHEREAS the State of Alaska through the Department of Education and Early Development already provides a Boarding Home Program for secondary students that could be utilized to improve the quality of educational experiences for additional students impacted by school closings;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Southwest Region School District urges the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, the Alaska State Legislature and Governor Parnell to support adequate resources for the expansion of the eligibility requirements to include all students impacted by the closure of a rural-remote school to be eligible for the State Boarding Home Program.

PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED BY THE SCHOOL BOARD OF THE SOUTHWEST REGION SCHOOL DISTRICT THIS 25TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2012:



President, Southwest Region Schools



Superintendent, Southwest Region Schools

9-25-12

Date

9/25/12

Date

To: Honorable Senator John Coghill  
From: Superintendent Bob Crumley, Chugach School District  
Re: SB 47 -- Residential School Stipend

As an operator of a Variable-Term Residential Learning Center for over 16 years, I am submitting testimony in support of SB 47. I applaud this forward thinking proposed legislation.

Over 16 years ago, the Chugach School District embarked upon an effort to overcome the many barriers to our youth acquiring a quality education. We engaged our communities and acted upon their input. That input led to the development of our performance-based education system where learning is the constant, and time is the variable. This community input also led us to develop a residential program we call the Voyage To Excellence program, or VTE. Funded primarily through competitive grants, we've spent years developing a significant network of business partners who are key to helping our students succeed. From construction and health care to oil and hospitality, and everything in-between, business have constantly informed us that employability skills and life skills are equally important with academics when it comes to hiring today's youth. We listened to them. We embedded their input into our educational system.

The result is a very successful, holistic educational program that helps students understand the value of learning. Now, rather than trying to avoid school, or fight being taught, students voluntarily seek out learning. Not only on school days, but during summer vacations and weekends, students choose to participate in VTE because it is relevant. Partnering with other school districts, VTE now serves students from around the state.

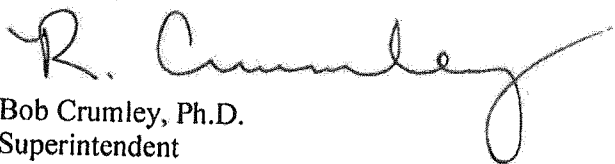
Student need was the driving force for the development of our variable-term residential program. The VTE program has been successfully meeting student needs for over 16 years. As the operator of this program, we know the following:

- We know the overwhelming need for this type of program across Alaska
- We know the how to successfully build such a program
- We know how to successfully operate such a program
- We know what it takes to sustain such a program
- We know the value and benefits VTE provides for the students
- We know the positive impact VTE has upon schools in Alaska
- We know the value VTE provides for Alaska (from financial & economical to social & health benefits)

Building such a program outside of state support has been a challenge to say the least. Sustaining VTE for the long term is proving to be an even greater challenge. To meet that challenge, the Chugach School District is currently developing an application to become designated as a statewide residential school. The proposed increase to the residential school stipend is essential to sustain the state's residential school programs that are meeting the needs of Alaskan students like no other school is able to do. This increase can in no way be considered a hand out, but should be considered a leg up for the kids of Alaska.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this input, and for your support of SB 47.

Sincerely,



Bob Crumley, Ph.D.  
Superintendent  
Chugach School District

**Nenana City Public School**  
**PO Box 10 Nenana, AK 99760**

**Phone: (907) 832-5464/Fax: (907) 832-5625**

**"A Community of Opportunity - Preparing Students for Life"**

March 11, 2013

Senator John Coghill  
State Capitol Room 119  
Juneau AK, 99801

Re: Support Letter for SB 47

Dear Senator Coghill,

The school board of the Nenana City School District fully supports SB 47, "An Act relating to boarding schools operated by school districts; and providing for an effective date." Furthermore, the Board fully supports proposed changes to allow for the inclusion of district operated, regional residential education programs serving students the full school year or those programs of variable length.

In our twelve year history, the Nenana Student Living Center has provided nearly 500 students, from all parts of the State, the opportunity to live in a safe, educationally supportive environment. Through the end of the 2011-2012 school year, 134 students have graduated from Nenana High School while living in our residence facility, with an additional 11 students set to graduate in May 2013.

We believe the positive results we have achieved for students can and should be expanded and duplicated on a larger scale through the passage of SB 47. The existing availability of residential programming in the State does not yet meet the needs of the students and the choice of their parents. The passage of SB 47 will assist in that expansion effort and help to ensure that each residential program has the minimum funding necessary to provide required services and supervision of students.

Thank you for sponsoring this legislation. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Eric Gebhart  
Superintendent

"providing all students with the tools and learning environment necessary to commit to achieving success"

# AlaskaDispatch

News and voices from the Last Frontier

Published on *Alaska Dispatch* (<http://www.alaskadispatch.com>)

[Home](#) > Revolution in rural Alaska education? Many embracing regional schools.

Suzanna Caldwell <sup>[1]</sup>

November 26, 2012

Despite almost two decades of working in rural Alaska schools, Iditarod School District <sup>[2]</sup> Superintendent Scott Ballard still wasn't prepared when his daughter decided that she wanted to attend Mt. Edgecumbe High School in Sitka <sup>[3]</sup>.

"Those are some of the most important years," Ballard said from McGrath, a village of about 400 located 200 miles northwest of Anchorage. "You certainly don't want to not be able to have that close family bond when they're in high school."

Ballard's predicament is one many parents living in rural Alaska face <sup>[4]</sup>. Legal rulings in the 1970s mandated high schools in tiny, off-the-road villages across the state. Before then, high school students had two choices: Stay in their village home, surrounded by family and a familiar culture, or leave to attend four years of boarding school.

While the Tobeluk Consent Decree, also known as the Molly Hootch Act <sup>[5]</sup>, made it possible to establish high schools in off-the-road villages, those schools have struggled to keep up with their on-the-road counterparts. Some parents, like Ballard, watch their children leave home for Mt. Edgecumbe -- a state-run residential high school with about 400 students from across the state -- or move to Anchorage or Fairbanks to pursue educational opportunities unavailable at village schools.

"Those opportunities to learn and explore a wide and deep curriculum that you might have on the road system just isn't available to them." Ballard said.

The current state of rural high schools has some Alaska education leaders hoping to change how the 49th state funds residential high schools.

## Pitching board of education

Jerry Covey, a former Alaska commissioner of education now working as a nonprofit consultant, will ask the state board of education on Dec. 6 to consider amending a regulation regarding statewide residential education program stipends to include district-based and variable-length residential programs.

Such a change would be the push some rural school districts need to start establishing their own residential programs while boosting regional programs already in existence.

Today, state regulations limit housing assistance stipends to students attending a statewide residential program. Only three schools are eligible: Galena Interior Learning

Academy, Bethel Alternative Learning Academy and Nenana Student Living Center. Despite being a residential high school, the 60-year-old Mt. Edgecumbe is funded separately by the state.

The programs won't create boarding schools that send students away from home for four years of high school. Instead, they would send students to schools within their region for several weeks -- or even a semester -- at a time. Advocates say that by bringing more students together, the programs provide better learning opportunities while allowing students to stay reasonably close to their families, their communities and their cultural heritage.

"It's not meant to disadvantage anyone," Covey said. "We're not requiring anyone to participate in the (boarding school) programs. But I think it has some great advantages for our state."

Mt. Edgecumbe has a long, storied history of producing notable alumni, including rural Alaska legislators like Albert Kookesh and the late Al Adams. Other residential programs, like the Chugach School District's Voyage to Excellence, have graduation rates as high as 98 percent over the last eight years. In Bethel, the RANSEP residential program has noted major language arts and math improvements in just two years.

Covey said such a fundamental change would provide students opportunities in high-level math classes and science labs as well as access to study groups -- all while staying in their home regions.

The proposal has already found support. Citizens for the Educational Advancement of Alaska's Children (CEAAC) hired Covey to push for the change and communicate with educators across the state. In October, the Alaska Federation of Natives, the largest Native organization in Alaska, passed a resolution of support.

## **Bleak outlook**

A report Covey delivered in March describes the outlook of rural education in Alaska as bleak. "Alaska's system of small, off-the-road high schools deliver, for the most part, a second-rate education system that denies rural students the educational opportunities their on-the-road system counterparts enjoy."

Forty-four percent of the 131 "off-the-road" high schools Covey examined had 10 or fewer students. And 95 percent of the 2,662 students attending off-the-road high schools are Alaska Natives.

Covey also looked at data from the Alaska Performance Scholarship, a program established by the state Legislature in 2010 that awards scholarships to Alaska high school graduates based on overall grade-point average and a rigorous courseload.

According to the 2012 Alaska Performance Scholarship Outcome Report, 38 percent of white high school graduates were eligible for scholarships awarding up to \$4,700 per year for college or vocational training in Alaska -- but only 8 percent of the Alaska Native grads were eligible. Natives made up 18 percent of Alaska's high school senior class last year.

Much of the disparity comes down to educational opportunities in rural schools. Covey said many small high schools only have one or two teachers. Usually those teachers are "highly qualified" in one subject, even though they're required to teach an array of courses. The scholarship requires four years of math, something that's not going to be taught if a school's only teacher is highly qualified in English.

A lack of opportunities has forced some students to get an education outside the village.

The state funds schools based on formula that is student-driven. If a student leaves a district, funding follows him or her. Say a student living in Anchorage attends school in the Matanuska-Susitna School District -- that money gets allocated to the Mat-Su. The same happens if a student in rural Fort Yukon heads to boarding school in Galena -- although with so few students in those villages, the financial impact is much greater.

"(The student exodus) cannibalizes local schools," said CEAAC executive director Charles Wohlforth.

Ballard said in the last two years, 34 students have left the Iditarod School District to attend boarding school. With only 180 students being taught in district buildings, that's a hit, especially for already small class sizes

"You have a high school cohort of potentially of 15 kids and say seven or eight of them leave. It's pretty devastating for them," he said. "... (The students) start to feel pretty isolated."

## **Success stories and future hopes**

Several residential programs across the state are already in place. Take, for example, the RANSEP program -- a Rasmuson Foundation-funded arm of the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program housed within the University of Alaska Anchorage. About 20 students a year travel from villages in the Yukon-Kuskokwim region to Bethel to complete high level math and science courses not available in their home villages.

The students spend one semester attending Bethel Regional High School, the next semester in their village school, followed by a summer at UAA.

Currently, the students are housed with host families in Bethel, but dorm facilities should be finished by January 2014. Kurt Kuhne, executive director of Yuut Elitnaurviat, a non-profit vocational learning facility in Bethel, is in charge of housing the students. He said the host families receive \$675 a month to house a student.

He noted that in Bethel, the regional hub of western Alaska, costs are high. Electricity can cost 50 cents a kilowatt hour and gas is \$7 a gallon. Housing students, especially in rural Alaska, is going to cost more. But the in the long run, the community benefits are great.

"To talk about the investment, the alternative is having kids graduate totally unprepared for post-high-school success," he said.

In Anchorage, the Chugach School District (including Chenega Bay School, Chugach, FOCUS Homeschool, Tatitlek Community School, Whittier Community School) has run the

Voyage to Excellence program for 16 years, taking students from rural Alaska and bringing them to Anchorage for several days at a time to learn career, leadership and social skills. The program offers job shadows and internships, as well as high school exit exam preparation. While the program is open to all students, it tends to attract high-risk youth, said superintendent Bob Crumley.

### **\$400 per student per day**

While students come from across the state, the program is not considered a statewide residential program -- and is not eligible for the residential stipend. Crumley said that has made funding a challenge. The program is funded through numerous grants, partnerships with other school districts and assistance from Alaska Native regional corporations. He said it costs about \$400 per student, per day, to board them in one of the program's residencies. Either opening the period to apply for statewide status or changing how the residential stipend is distributed would help.

"We've tried to find any way possible to find the resources to keep this program going," he said. "Everybody wants to see it succeed, but sustaining it is our issue right now."

The Alaska Gateway School District, based in Tok, sees a change to the stipend as a way to move forward on its hopes for a district-based residential school. Superintendent Todd Poagh would like to one day build a 25-bed facility in Tok, with the plans of busing students in from the communities they serve on Sunday and sending them home on Friday. Poagh said the district would try to cater classes to whatever jobs are needed in the community, like home care, nursing or welding.

While the school district would need to find capital funding to finance the project, he said it would be easier to take on a project knowing more funding is available.

### **Increased costs?**

While the program is expected to cost the state more in terms of funding the stipend, Covey believes cost won't be a huge factor. Funding is based on a formula the state uses, so how many schools gain approval for the stipend and where they are located will play into the costs.

"I don't envision a lot of these schools," Covey said.

Plus, with some schools only needing the stipend for smaller amounts of time. The Voyage to Excellence program, for instance, works with about 240 students a year -- but it won't need 240 stipends.

Wohlforth with Citizens for the Educational Advancement of Alaska's Children said that while funding residential schools will be a challenge, there's "no reason to throw up hands and say we shouldn't have school."

"This is part of our state, it's never going away," he said. "But we need to be making sure those kids have the same opportunities."

Contact Suzanna Caldwell at [suzanna\(at\)alaskadispatch.com](mailto:suzanna(at)alaskadispatch.com) [6]



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[1] <http://www.alaskadispatch.com/authors/678505>

[2] <http://www.iditarodsd.org/>

[3] <https://sites.google.com/a/mehs.us/home/>

[4] <http://www.alaskadispatch.com/article/are-regional-boarding-schools-answer-bush-education>

[5] <http://www.scribd.com/doc/16621273/Molly-Hootch-and-the-Tobeluk-Consent-Decree>

[6] <mailto:suzanna@alaskadispatch.com>