



Southwest Region School District

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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