



# ALASKA GATEWAY SCHOOL DISTRICT

P.O. BOX 226, TOK, AK 99780

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**Superintendent of Schools**

Scott MacManus

January 27, 2019

Senator Gary Stevens, Chair  
Senate Education Committee  
State Capital Room 423  
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senator Stevens,

I am writing regarding SB30, the proposed Middle College program for High School Students. I should like to say, firstly, that I very much support this concept, and with some tweaks would be able to support SB30. I have practical experience with this sort of program that might be useful. For context. I worked for UAF in the 90's, where I designed and implemented dual-credit courses and program, and in 2003 started a College program here in Alaska Gateway School District. Since then we have had probably half a dozen students graduate from high school with an Associate's Degree and I couldn't tell you how many students have earned university credits. We have designed our program carefully, (see enclosed) and have evolved program practice here over those years.

To be fair, many school districts have developed and offer college programs that work well for their students and families. There are many upsides to this idea, from engaging students who demonstrably are capable of being challenged at a higher academic level, to creating unique opportunities for students for an educational experience that is customized to their personal interests. This is exactly what we have long been working to develop in Alaska Gateway. But there are also issues and landmines to be aware of.

First, this is an unfunded mandate, and potentially a very expensive one for school districts. ASA has a standing policy regarding "Unfunded Mandates", which this clearly would be. It will incur greater expenses for every school district, with no off-setting of those increased costs. Schools will still need the same number of teachers, curriculum and facilities, and so on...so this cost will become a direct add-on to our current expenses. A 3-credit UAF 100-200 level course currently costs \$636. If just 10% of the students in my district signed up for just one course per semester, this would cost my small school district \$25K in additional, unfunded costs, per year, or half the cost of new teacher. The way SB30 is currently written, there would seem to be no limits or established criteria for which students would be able to take advantage of this opportunity.

Another issue relates to those students who are enrolled in an approved correspondence program. It would not be difficult for a student to consume their entire allotment in just one semester under this program. In our district we allocate \$2400 a year to a secondary correspondence student, which is a little less than half of what the state BSA is for a correspondence student. Our program already costs the district more than it brings in, but we have absorbed that additional cost because it enables us to provide a unique service to our students in the district. This would be less than 4 classes, at current costs. We would have to eliminate our correspondence program completely, if this proposal went through as currently stated, without limits. These are also students whose families often will not comply with district and federal assessment requirements, because state law allows these students to decline taking an assessment, while simultaneously punishing districts who do not have a high enough "participation-rate", or numbers of students who take the assessment. This matters, because without assessment there is no program accountability, relating to its effectiveness, or lack thereof.

## **"Where Teachers Are The Gateway To Learning"**

<b>DotLake</b> 907-882-2663 Fax: 907-882-2112	<b>Eagle</b> 907-547-2210 Fax: 907-547-2302	<b>Mentasta</b> 907-291-2327 Fax: 907-291-2325	<b>Northway</b> 907-778-2287 Fax: 907-778-2221	<b>Tok</b> 907-883-5161 Fax: 907-883-5165	<b>Tanacross</b> 907-883-4391 Fax: 907-883-4390	<b>Tetlin</b> 907-324-2104 Fax: 907-324-2114
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Another issue has to do with instructors. University faculty are typically hired for their content knowledge, not their teaching ability. Lower level courses in particular are often taught by adjuncts or TA's (teaching assistants), who may not be trained in teaching pedagogy, or student academic development. This practice works fine for some students...those who are mature or self-motivated enough, and who have support at home. As you know, however, this is not the case for many students. At the University level, students are most often left to their own devices, sink or swim, and for some students, this could have disastrous long-term consequences, including the potential for permanent damage to a student's academic records, which I think you agree would be entirely counter-productive.

And finally, there is potential long-term harm to a student who signs up for a class but is not truly ready for it. My district has designed built in supports for students who are taking college courses. We vet students, set aside a time and place in the schedule for them to take the course, and assign (and pay) content area teachers who are available to assist and support these students, so that we ensure that they succeed. Failing a university course can become a permanent black mark on a student's record, which may discourage them from taking any more classes. Enclosed, I've attached an email from a parent who is also one of our teachers, with exactly this issue in mind, that I received just this week...a parent with a high-end student who is taking a university math class. We require our families to have some "skin in the game". We have learned that if we do not, a high percentage of these students will fail the class. You will see in the attached email, that the parent is concerned about this. They need support at home, AND at school. When the district reimburses these costs after a vetting process, the student success rate is nearly 100 percent. Before we did that, our success rate was less than 25%. These failed classes stay on a student's transcript forever, both at the University and at the District level...lowering the student's GPA, and harming their ability to get into a good college or earn scholarships.

There are changes that could be made to this bill to make it work a bit better for kids, for example:

- There should be no cost for a school district to purchase or transcribe credits through the UA system in this program. Any additional costs should be borne by the state.
- Program eligibility and enrollment requirements should be determined by the district, and not through a sweeping statutory requirement at the state level.
- District's should be allowed to place limits on costs. See example above of the correspondence program students.

I look forward to the opportunity to discuss this with you or your staff further.

Best Regards,



Scott MacManus

## Commentary on SB30

### Sec. 14.30.780. Middle college program established.

- (a) The middle college program is established for eligible students to enroll in courses offered by the University of Alaska. A student may earn both high school and college credit for each course the student has satisfactorily completed. A student may attend a course in person or by correspondence, as allowed by the University of Alaska.
- (b) A student is eligible for the middle college program if the student
- (1) is enrolled in public school in the state;
  - (2) has completed the 10th grade;
  - (3) has not been awarded a high school diploma; and
  - (4) complies with the requirements of the program.
- (c) Every school district shall participate in the middle college program. The school district in which a student is enrolled shall pay the student's tuition, at the University of Alaska's resident tuition rate, for a course offered through the program. The student is responsible for all other expenses, including fees, books, and transportation.
- (d) For the purpose of calculating a school district's ADM under AS 14.17.410, a student participating in the middle college program is considered a full-time student of the school district in which the student is enrolled.
- (e) The University of Alaska and a school district may release to each other the transcript of a student to determine the student's eligibility for the middle college program or for graduation.
- (f) In this section, "school district" has the meaning given in AS 14.30.350.

Microsoft Office User  
How is a student determined to be eligible? By the school, or by the University? Should be established by district

Microsoft Office User  
What is satisfactory? Who establishes this? Is a "D" sufficient? In our program a "C" is required to continue the program.

Microsoft Office User Friday  
"is enrolled in High School and has met school district established program eligibility requirements"

Microsoft Office User  
"Program Requirements" refers to the High School Program, as established per the agreement referred to in AS36.30.085(7)

Microsoft Office User  
Work with their UA branch to establish an MOA that governs participation

Microsoft Office User  
The negotiated rate

Microsoft Office User  
This cost will be a barrier for many students, and is one that we work with our students families on, based on need.

## FYI Email from parent, regarding her son taking a pre-calculus college math course

**From:** Deb ██████████@agsd.us  
**Subject:** Liz is awesome  
**Date:** January 26, 2019 at 23:48  
**To:** Scott Holmes sholmes@agsd.us, Scott MacManus smacmanus@agsd.us, Tracie Weisz tweisz@agsd.us

Hello everyone,

I just wanted to give a shout out to Liz ██████████. She helped Tyler and several others sign up for a college pre-calc class this semester. As the course began to unfold it seemed to Tyler that he wasn't ready for that level of math, and he was having a lot of anxiety about losing my \$1000 tuition fee, and also ruining his GPA. So after working really hard for a couple of weeks to try to make it work, he was just getting more and more stressed and was losing sleep over it. So we went to talk with Liz, and she just very calmly and clearly gave Tyler some options, and helped him make a decision about what to do. After conferring with Tracie, she ended up offering to create a course for him (and each of the other kids in the class) based on using his MAP scores and data to fill in their individual holes. So he is taking her personalized math course this semester to better prepare him to take the college course again next year, with more confidence and a more solid foundation.

I am just so grateful that Liz puts in the extra time it takes to personalize the class to each students' needs, really cares about her students' success, and took the time to care about how Tyler was feeling.

She pretty much ROCKS. Glad she's a part of our school.

Deb

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Debbie ██████████  
Kindergarten Teacher  
Tok, Alaska

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## AGSD University Transcription Credit & Reimbursement Request Information

This protocol outlines the requirements for transcribing university credit on AGSD Transcripts, and for reimbursement to eligible pre-approved students who are enrolled in University of Alaska (UofA) classes.

### Eligibility Requirements

- Student must be enrolled fulltime in an AGSD School.
- The student must be on track for graduation, and recommended by their principal.

### Reimbursement Requirements

- Student may be reimbursed for no more than three UofA credits per semester until they completed two semester successfully, after which they may take two courses per semester.
- Student and parent must submit for approval an AGSD University Transcription Credit & Reimbursement Request form prior to starting the class. (See Attached)
- Parent or student must pay up-front for the class. (or complete a fee-waiver application)
- Copies of university receipts along with proof of payment must be provided to the school district by May 30<sup>th</sup> of the school year during which the class was taken. Reimbursements requested after this may not be honored.
- Official course grade must be turned in to the district by May 30<sup>th</sup> of that school year. No payment will be made until the final grade is turned in to the district.
- Failing to get approvals or submitting for approvals late may result in reimbursement being denied.
- Books and other media are not eligible for reimbursement, and may be kept or sold by the student.
- This program may not be used to pay for Developmental Classes (eg; DEVE Math).
- Student must receive a grade of "C" or better, or a "P" for a pass/fail course.
- Only UofA courses qualify for reimbursement.

### AGSD Transcribing

- University credits will be converted on the following basis: One third (1/3) high school credit for a core program course, and one sixth (1/6) high school credit per University semester elective credit. (See BP5121.1 (c))
- Pass/fail courses may NOT be used to meet Core Required Credit
- No University grades will be entered onto AGSD transcripts without official university transcripts.
- Obtaining and submitting university transcripts the responsibility of the student/parent.
- University Courses will typically only count for elective credit, unless specifically approved.
- **Only UofA courses may meet core credit requirement for AGSD** and these must be preapproved. (see list of AGSD required courses in BP6146.1(b)). A class not pre-approved will be transcribed on the AGSD transcript as elective credit once an official Transcript is received.

Initial School Board Approval 1/2010 (Updated 9/2015)

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**AGSD University Transcription Credit & Reimbursement Request Form**

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Current GPA \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

- I am requesting the following university course be entered on my AGSD transcript
- I am requesting pre-approval for Reimbursement for the following UofA Class:

Course Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Course ID#: \_\_\_\_\_ No of Credits \_\_\_\_\_

Instructors Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Start date \_\_\_\_\_ End date \_\_\_\_\_ End of the School Year is May 30, 20\_\_\_\_

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Amount of Tuition/Lab fee reimbursement request

**Check one:**

- This course request is for AGSD Elective credit
- This course request is for AGSD Core Required credit \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of required class from BP6146.1(b)

Please read the following and sign:

***"I have read and fully understand the Eligibility, Reimbursement and Transcription requirements for the school district."***

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

*This student meets the eligibility requirements and is recommended for this course.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Principals Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Pre-Approval is REQUIRED to ensure reimbursement!**

The above course is approved for (Elective/Core Credit) for \_\_\_\_\_ credits, fulfilling AGSD credit for the following class: \_\_\_\_\_ Once completed the district will reimburse for the amount of: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Program Director

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Completion Checklist (All items MUST be received)**

- U of A receipt
- Proof of Payment (copy of cancelled check or credit card receipt)
- Date of Completion and copy of grade report \_\_\_\_\_
- Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ (to be transcribed must have passed, for reimbursement, be a "C" or better)
- Official University Transcripts

**Signature is required for final approval of reimbursement funds. The student has met all requirements.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Program Director

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date