



Good morning. My name is Bill Whicker and I am the Technology Coordinator in the Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District and the Director of the Alaska Digital Academy. I appreciate the opportunity to share our experiences with serving digital courses with districts through the Alaska Digital Academy and how it relates to SB79.

The Alaska Digital Academy was created from the 2014 Digital Teaching Initiative grant that was awarded to 4 school districts in Alaska. The focus of our project was to create an enrollment portal that provides Alaska districts with an efficient, scalable, customizable and affordable tool for choosing and enrolling Alaska students into available courses. We knew that the logistics of the entire process of delivering courses in a statewide model often dictates success or failure. Rather than follow the traditional route, we chose to employ a software developer to build a web-based, data-driven system from the ground up to fit Alaska student needs rather than buy a product and try to fit Alaska students into a product. This automation not only saves money, it reduces the possibility of errors with the data.

We achieved this by creating the Alaska Digital Academy online portal that currently serves students from 13 different school districts on a tuition basis. The system is:

- Secure and built to industry standards with common programming practices
- Scalable with the capacity to serve 1000's of students
- Efficient on the user-interface side to allow local district support personnel to quickly enroll students with minimal training.
- Efficient administrative tools to allow Alaska Digital Academy staff to process enrollment and financial information quickly and with confidence.
- Expandable to allow for changes based on our statewide customer input

The Alaska Digital Academy, and the practices developed from our experiences working with rural school districts, has built a solid infrastructure that has survived beyond the original grant funds. We are able to address the numerous logistical details of offering statewide educational opportunities to Alaskan students that include but are not limited to

- site-based enrollment
- a secure payment portal
- Secure data management and reporting
- on-site supervisor support to provide motivation and consistency in the local classroom.
- teacher support
- Credit recovery
- Course challenge procedures
- And we have a Multi-Tiered System of Support module in the planning stages.

We applaud the forward thinking of SB 79 and look forward to the possibility of contributing to and being a part of the solution for improving academic outcomes for Alaskan students.