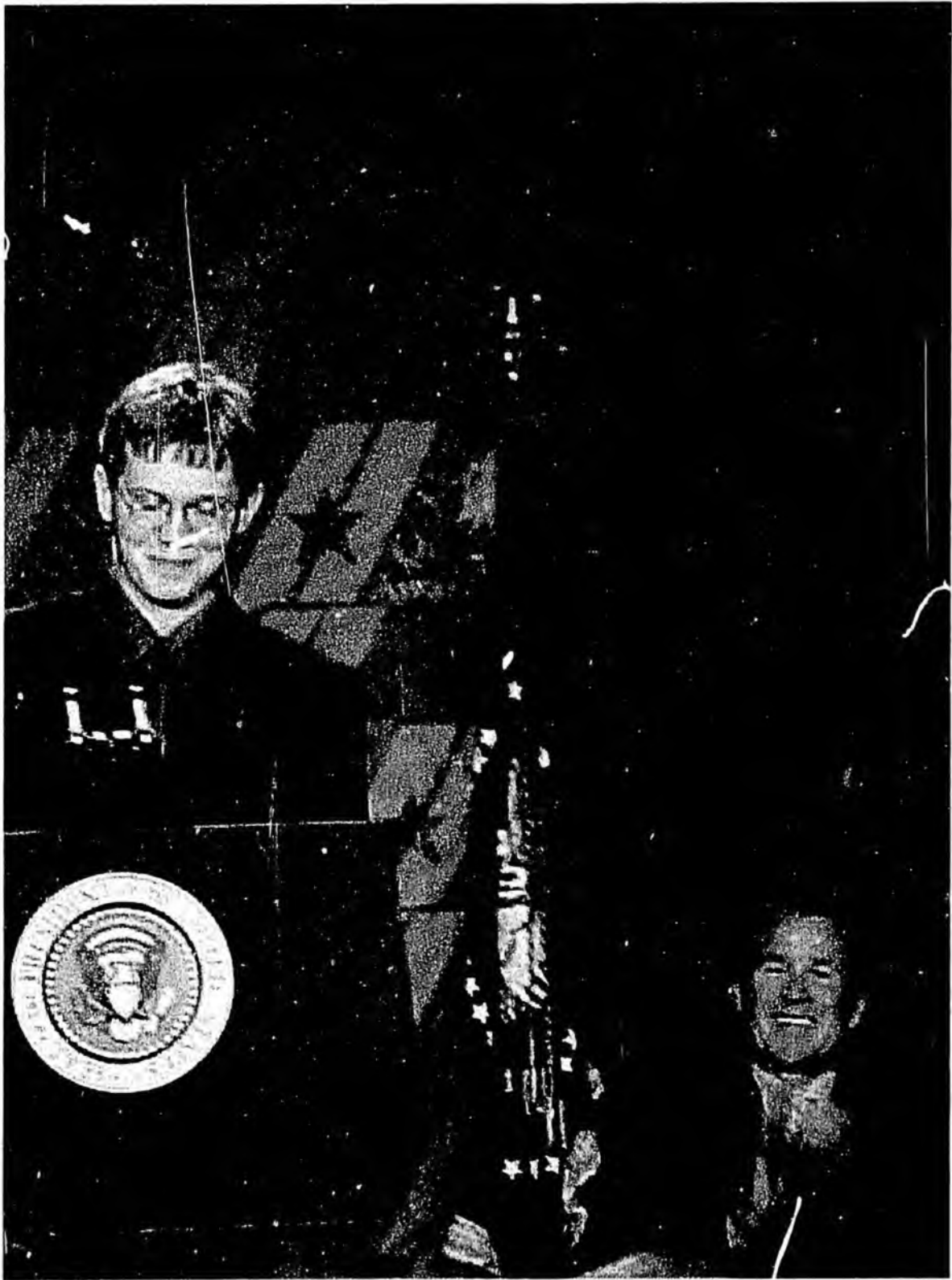


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CHUGACH
SCHOOL

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FILE





2001 Award Winner

Chugach School District

The Chugach School District (CSD) is not your typical school district. It encompasses 22,000 square miles in south central Alaska, including much of the Prince William Sound coastline. Most of its 214 students live in remote areas, accessible only by aircraft. Teachers have to be adept at a variety of subjects, including wilderness and cold water safety and how to respond in the event of a tsunami or an encounter with a bear. District programs span from pre-school to post-secondary education, serving students up to age 21.

CSD has pioneered a standards-based system of "whole child education" that emphasizes real-life learning situations. After securing a waiver from the Alaska Department of Education, the district replaced credit hours and grade levels—hallmarks of traditional schooling—with an individualized, student-centered approach. This approach aims for measurable—and demonstrable—proficiency in 10 areas of performance, from basic academic and career development skills to cultural awareness and character skills. CSD's high-school graduation requirements exceed Alaska's requirements in many ways.

Thirty staff members serve the district's widely dispersed student population. Eighteen are based at three community schools. One manages a school-to-work program in Anchorage. The rest are either visiting teachers and specialists who work with home-schooled children or supply education support services. All work with students of various ages, and all teach multiple subjects.



Highlights

- Results on the California Achievement Test rose dramatically—in reading, from the 28th percentile in 1995 to the 71st in 1999; in math, from 54th to 78th; and in language arts from 26th to 72nd.
- Fourteen of 17 CSD graduates since 1994 are attending post-secondary institutions, as compared with one between 1975 and 1994.
- In the four subject areas tested in Alaska's High School Graduation Qualifying Examination, CSD topped the state average.
- CSD led the formation of the Alaska Quality Schools Coalition, and 12 school districts, in and out of Alaska, are replicating the Chugach model.

Though unique in many ways, CSD initiated a grass roots school reform movement that has given rise to successful instructional and organizational methods that schools in other parts of the United States are working to emulate.

CSD is the smallest organization ever to win a Baldrige Award.

Onward to Excellence

Since 1994, when it began a comprehensive restructuring effort, CSD has progressed from a school district in crisis to one in which student performance exceeds state and national norms. Schools that once had been the cause of local discontent are now a source of community pride.

When CSD leaders initiated their "onward to excellence" process, indicators of student performance were well below state and national averages, with staff turnover exceeding 50 percent. Scores on the California Achievement Test were the lowest in the state, and the average student was reading three grades below grade level. Business leaders complained that CSD graduates were deficient in basic skills, and in 26 years, only one student went on to college.

From the outset, the district's overhaul was undertaken collaboratively—with CSD staff, current and past students, parents, school board members, and business and community leaders. Stakeholder meetings yielded a core vision, shared values and beliefs, and five categories of organizational performance goals: basic skills, individual needs of students, character development, transition skills, and technology. Throughout, stakeholders emphasized that accountability should be built into the educational system and embedded in CSD's performance goals.

Continuum of Standards

With the aim of helping students reach their full potential as individuals and as members of their communities, CSD created a continuum of standards for 10 content areas. Demonstrable proficiency in each area—and not the number of credit hours earned—was set as the essential condition for graduation. Once it secured a waiver from the credit-based graduation requirement, CSD proceeded to implement and refine an innovative standards-based system that has the flexibility to accommodate the personal learning styles and speeds of all students.

Specific minimum graduation levels of mastery were established for the 10 content areas. Through a variety of formal and informal assessments at each step, students are evaluated in the traditional areas of reading, writing, mathematics, social science, and science as well as in the non-traditional areas of service learning, career development, technology, cultural awareness and expression, and personal/social/health development. These assessments are designed to determine whether students can apply skills and knowledge in real situations.

Students work at their own developmentally appropriate pace. Some may achieve graduation-level proficiency as early as age 14, while others may meet the requirement at age 21. Once students master level four—midway to graduation—they receive a wireless laptop computer.

CSD students still must meet the state benchmark testing requirements and pass the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam. While these exams cover reading, writing, and math, CSD's graduation requirements include science and social science and its five non-traditional content areas.

Individualized Learning

CSD's standards-based system is no mystery to students or to their parents. Expectations are clear and progress toward meeting them is documented in a running record of assessments completed in all content areas. Teachers, children, and parents regularly consult these student assessment binders. Upon graduation, students are given their assessment binders, which serve as proof of skill mastery.

Student assessment binders are but one of several CSD tools designed to accommodate individual differences in learning and to foster school system accountability. For each child, a student learning profile, or SLP, is developed and then updated every three years. Through testing and other means, each student is assessed to determine his or her learning patterns. This knowledge enables teachers to determine whether, for example, a student learns best through visual instruction, by means of hearing, or with physical aids that can be manipulated.

SLPs are key inputs into learning plans tailored to the strengths, weaknesses, developmental stage, and circumstances of each child. As teachers prepare these individualized instructional strategies, students participate in

setting goals for demonstrating mastery of the 10 content areas at the relevant level.

Integrated learning and multi-sensory approaches to teaching are key elements of CSD's "whole child" education. Each year, district staff meet to develop thematic units for the upcoming school year. Resulting lesson plans and student projects transcend content areas, so subjects are not taught in isolation. A key aim is to help students make real-life connections and recognize the value and usefulness of what they are learning.

CSD's Anchorage House epitomizes this approach to contextual learning. Students at the junior high levels begin participation in this four-phase residential program, which provides them with opportunities to apply their learning skills in an urban community. During the last two phases, which may span from several weeks to 10 months, students participate in internships or other workplace programs as they take responsibility for managing their daily activities.

Unity of Focus, Commitment

Although students, faculty, and resources are widely dispersed, CSD has succeeded in achieving a unity of focus among staff and stakeholders. Stakeholder meetings are held quarterly, and surveys to gather community input on CSD performance and goals are conducted annually. Community members regularly attend in-service learning and planning sessions for CSD staff.

A variety of district-wide tools, such as the Chugach Instructional Model for developing integrated-learning teaching units and an automated student tracking system, promote cohesion among staff. Also, to align action plans, CSD offers 30 days of faculty training each year, double the state average. In addition, a professional development fund provides faculty and staff with up to \$1,000 each for outside training.

CSD supplements salaries with a pay-for-performance system that rewards individual and district-wide accomplishments. Recognizing the challenging demands that confront faculty in their isolated locations, the district provides for flexible working conditions, allowing arrangements for sharing or rotating jobs and creating a relief team of experienced teachers. The faculty turnover rate, which averaged 55 percent between 1975 and 1994, has fallen to 12 percent.

For more information:

Debbie Treece

9312 Vanguard Drive

Anchorage, AK 99507

Telephone: (907) 522-7400

E-mail: dtreece@chugachschools.com

or

Wendy Battino

Telephone: (907) 733-7425

E-mail: wjb@pobox.mtaonline.net

Web Site: www.chugachschools.com

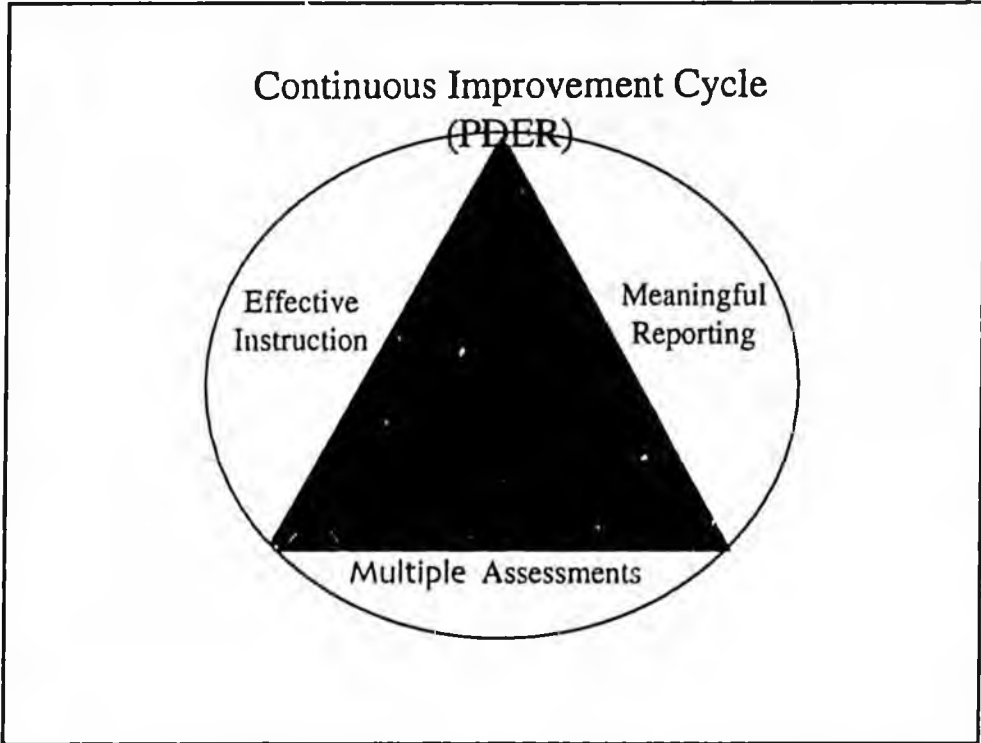
Chugach School District

Voyage to Excellence
2002

Obstacles to High Achievement 1994

- Unhealthy Family/Community
- Student Apathy
- Lack of Parental Involvement
- Lack of Meaningful Curriculum
- Specific Needs of Students
- Funding
- No Site Plan
- Poor Professional Development
- Teacher Burnout

Original Chugach School District	21st. Century Chugach School District
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credit or "Seat Time" • Graded System • Disconnected Reporting • Text Book Curriculum • No School to Life Plan • Individual needs not met • Institutionally Centered 	<p>Performance-Based System Developmental Levels P-14 Report Card (DRC) Standards-Based Resources Comprehensive School to Life Individual Learning Plans Student Centered</p>



Organizational Performance Results

1994-95

1998-99

4th Grade Scores

Reading

- ◆ 16.6% top quartile
- ◆ 16.6% bottom quartile

Math

- ◆ 41.5% top quartile
- ◆ 8.3% bottom quartile

Language Arts

- ◆ 25% top quartile
- ◆ 41.6% bottom quartile

8th Grade Scores

Reading

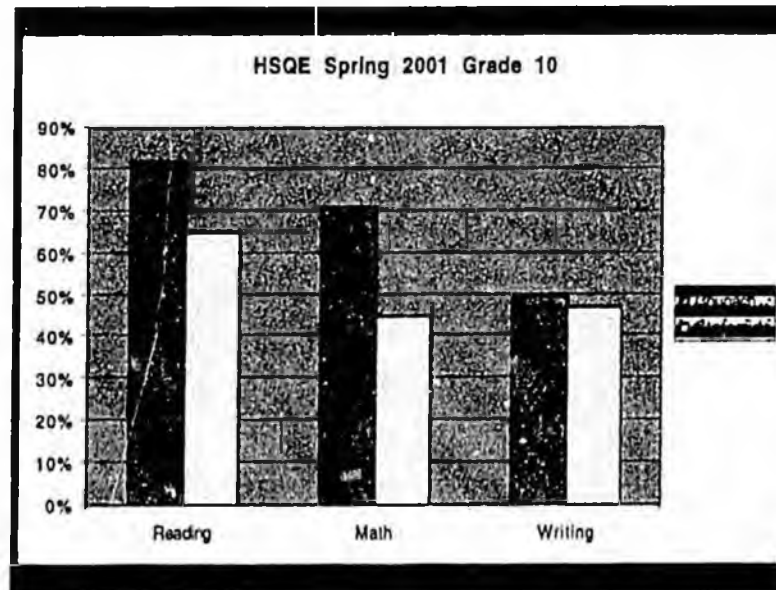
- ◆ 55.6% top quartile
- ◆ 0.0% bottom quartile

Math

- ◆ 77.8% top quartile
- ◆ 0.0% bottom quartile

Language Arts

- ◆ 33.3% top quartile
- ◆ 11.1% bottom quartile



About Chugach School District and the Reinventing Schools Model

Why Chugach School District Implemented the Reinventing Schools Model:

In 1994, Chugach School District (CSD) reinvented its system to address common obstacles to high achievement. Some of these obstacles included: dysfunctional family/community, substance abuse, student apathy, specific needs of students, and teacher burnout. The successful components of this model include:

Shared Vision – includes all stakeholders (schools, communities, businesses, students, and staff)

Standards – clear learning objectives in ten areas (mathematics, science, technology, reading, writing, social sciences, service learning, career development, cultural awareness and expression, and personal/social/health development)

Assessments – district created assessments that measure all district standards

Instructional Model – a method that ensures real-life connections outside the classroom

Reporting – various methods to communicate student progress on district standards to all stakeholders

Continuous Improvement – refinement of all components based on stakeholder input

Specifics of the Model:

Humans learn and develop at different rates, but educational systems do not allow for this individuality. The power of the Chugach model is that students are given the flexibility to achieve developmental levels at their own pace. Some students achieve graduation levels at 14 years of age while others reach them at age 21. This individualizing of our educational system allows all students throughout the entire spectrum to succeed by taking ownership of their educational careers, and reaching the graduation levels at a pace that is developmentally appropriate for them. No student waits for the rest of the class or is pushed into learning beyond their developmental level. Students receive a diploma by mastering district standards in all ten areas. They are not awarded traditional high school credits (Carnegie units) based on time spent in the classroom.

How CSD is helping other school districts to replicate the model:

- CSD staff has given over 500 volunteer hours to districts around the state and nation wishing to learn more about CSD and the Reinventing Schools Model
- CSD has raised over 8 million dollars for numerous districts to implement the model.
- Due to the unprecedented success of CSD, other school districts throughout Alaska have sought assistance in applying for, and earning, waivers from using the standards Carnegie unit.
- CSD has set a precedent of 30 staff training days per year.
- The Alaska Quality Schools Initiative (a state effort to improve schools by implementing standards) is guided and supported by the Chugach Model.
- A Chugach Model CD and a manual, "The Guide to Reinventing Schools" are being put to use around the nation to help interested districts pursue excellence in education involving all stakeholders.

For more information, see CSD web site: www.chugachschools.com

Chugach 'leaves no child behind'

WASHINGTON — The Chugach School District is one of the strangest in America. Encompassing 22,000 square miles of remote Alaska wilderness, ranging from the islands of Prince William Sound to isolated Bush villages, it has only 214 students and barely two dozen teachers on its staff. Unemployment in the area tops 50 percent, and three-fourths of the people — many of them Aleuts — are below the poverty line.

Yet in seven years, this School District, facing challenges of almost unimaginable scope and complexity, has transformed itself into a national model of education reform whose methods are being copied not only across Alaska, but now in the Seattle public schools as well.

Last week, the Chugach superintendent, Richard DeLorenzo, stood before a ballroom full of high-powered executives, explaining how little Chugach had won the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, an honor that in the past has gone to companies such as Cadillac and Ritz-Carlton as a signal of their success in providing customer satisfaction. The rigorous competition — named for the late commerce secretary in the Reagan administration — has been around for 14 years, but this is the first time any winners have been found in the education world. In addition to Chugach, the five honorees this year included the Pearl River School District, an affluent area in Rockland County, north of New York City, and the Universi-

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COMMENT



ty of Wisconsin-Stout in Menomonie.

But it is the Chugach story that carries the strongest message to districts that take seriously President Bush's challenge to "leave no child behind."

In 1994, when DeLorenzo arrived, the average Chugach student was 3 years behind grade level in reading and lagging badly in other areas as well. Now these students have moved from the 28th percentile nationally in reading to the 71st percentile; from the 53rd percentile in math to the 78th; and from the 22nd percentile in spelling to the 65th. When state proficiency exams began in 2000, Chugach students topped the Alaska average by 8 percent in reading, 17 percent in math and 35 percent in writing.

This was not accomplished, DeLorenzo stressed, by "teaching to the test." To the contrary, the Chugach curriculum goes beyond the basics to include technology (a laptop is provided every student), science and social studies. Special emphasis is placed on service learning (involving students in community projects), personal health (to offset

alcoholism, which is widespread in the villages), cultural awareness (to broaden horizons) and career development (to ease transition to work).

The district provides performance pay bonuses and scholarship benefits to its teachers and offers them an unusually robust 30 days a year of in-service training. It has done this while cutting the administrative overhead from 25 percent to 10 percent of state and federal funds, putting the savings and a growing amount of foundation support into instructional programs.

But the key to success, DeLorenzo said, was the application of "Baldrige principles" to the whole process. It began with structured discussions with the "customers," the parents and other villagers, local businesses and the students themselves, to identify their needs and goals. The whole system was then redesigned to achieve those results.

This systemic approach to education reform is being tried in a growing number of districts across the country, and DeLorenzo recently lobbied Secretary of Education Rod Paige to embrace it as the best bet to achieve Bush's goals.

Few places face the physical and social challenges of Chugach. DeLorenzo says he will not rest until at least a million other youngsters are experiencing the success his 214 students have come to know.

David Broder is a reporter and columnist for the Washington Post.

Spring 2002 Retreat for School Leaders

Improving Student Results - What Leaders Need to Know

Alaska Staff Development Network and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation present:

Tom Vander Ark, Executive Director, Education, Gates Foundation LIVE, video streaming, 45-minute keynote speech for:

"Spring 2002 Retreat for School Leaders"
- Improving Student Results - What Leaders Need to Know
Thursday, April 18, 2002 / Anchorage Marriott Hotel
Anchorage, Alaska



Tom Vander Ark
Executive Director, Education

Tom Vander Ark is responsible for the development and administration of the foundation's K-12 education grant programs and scholarship programs. For the five years before he joined the foundation, Vander Ark served as a public school superintendent in one of Washington state's larger districts. He was one of the first superintendents recruited from the private sector to lead a public school district. Prior to leading Federal Way Public Schools, Vander Ark ran a consulting practice for Cap Gemini and was a senior executive for a \$5 billion national retailer. Vander Ark serves on the board of the Washington Early Learning Foundation, Partnership for Learning and Communities in School.

<http://www.gatesfoundation.org/>



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If you do not already have Quicktime installed, please plan on downloading it at least 1 hour before broadcast.
[Click here to download QuickTime for FREE \(PC & Mac\).](#)

Please join us for this exciting event! For more information on the entire Leadership program, see:
http://www.asdn.org/sp_2002_retreat_4_leaders/index.html

The Alaska Staff Development Network has received two major grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to restructure education in Alaska. For more information on these grants, please go to:

[Alaska Quality Schools Coalition](#)
[Leadership for Reinventing Schools](#)

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**Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award
2001 Award Recipient—Education Category**

Chugach School District

Highest Official: Richard DeLorenzo
Superintendent

Public Affairs Contact: Ron Gleason
Chugach School District Public Relations
(704) 907-9356
(907) 522-7400 (Chugach School District Office)

Web Site: www.chugachschools.com

The Chugach School District Office is based in Anchorage, Alaska. Chugach's 214 students are scattered throughout 22,000 square miles of mostly isolated and remote areas of South Central Alaska. With 30 faculty and staff, CSD is the smallest organization to ever win a Baldrige Award. CSD delivers instruction in education from preschool up to age 21 in a comprehensive, standards-based system. Education occurs 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Instruction is delivered in the work place, in the community, in the home and in school. Half (50%) of the students in the Chugach School District are minorities (Alaska Natives).

Highlights:

- CSD has a waiver from the Alaska Department of Education to use a performance-based system in 10 Content Areas in place of the traditional Carnegie Units – Traditional grades are no longer given.
- Every student at CSD has an Individual Learning Plan
- Assessments go beyond recall and memory of arbitrary facts. CSD assessments include contextual (real life), analytical (ability to apply problem solving techniques to any situation), and skills-based assessments.
- Learning occurs 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- 30 in-service training days offered annually
- All stakeholders include businesses, communities, parents, students, and staff. **Not only are they involved in the development, implementation and ongoing evaluation, but they also thoroughly understand the system.**
- Students have Student Learning Profiles which outlines current function levels, instructional learning styles, strengths and weakness. This data is used to customize instructional delivery and increase student and parent awareness.
- Chugach has developed the processes and materials that support their system.
- 12 other school districts, both in and out of Alaska, are at various stages of replicating the Chugach Education Model, thanks to the tremendous support of the **GATES Foundation.**

Quality and Performance Achievements:

- Chugach School District (CSD) involves all stakeholders in its strategic planning process—including students, parents, community members, and businesses—to develop a shared vision, organizational performance goals, a five-year timeline of activities, and one-year targets. The goals address student learning and development in basic skills, individual needs of students, character development, transition skills, and technology. In 2001, stakeholders gave high satisfaction ratings to CSD in these five outcome areas with basic skills at 96 percent, individual needs of students at 89 percent, character development education at 84 percent, transition skills at 89 percent, and technology at 89 percent.
- Results on the California Achievement Tests improved in all content areas from 1995 to 1999. Average national percentile scores increased in reading from 28th to 71st, in language arts from 26th to 72nd, in math from 54th to 78th, and in spelling from 22nd to 65th. In addition, the percent of students in the top quartile increased in reading from 17 to 56, in language arts from 25 to 33, and in math from 42 to 79.
- The state of Alaska began administering the High School Graduation Qualifying Examinations (HSGQE) and State Benchmark Exams in third, sixth, eighth, and 10th grades in 2000. In 2001, the percent of CSD students who passed the HSGQE surpassed the Alaska state average in all three subject areas of reading, writing, and math and in all four grades tested. In addition, the percent of CSD's 10th graders who passed the HSGQE ranked first in **writing**, third in math, and 17th in reading among the state's 54 districts.
- The percentage of CSD students who take college entrance exams has increased from 0 percent to 70 percent since 1998.
- CSD's percentage of state funds that are used for instruction increased steadily from 51% in 1995 to 82% in 2001, surpassing the state's mandatory guideline of 70 percent. Chugach has the highest percentage of its budget directed to instruction when compared with all other rural Alaskan districts. CSD administrative and support service expenses fell from 25 percent in 1994 to the current level of 10 percent.
- CSD uses a set of developmental levels instead of traditional grade divisions to achieve district and state standards that address 10 content areas that are aligned with CSD's vision and performance goals. The four-step Chugach Instructional Model enables students to progress through the 10 content areas by using drill and practice, practical application, interactive simulation, and real-life situations. Embedded in the instructional model are thematic units that cross disciplines so students connect learning in content areas such as reading, math, science, social studies, art, and technology.
- Every CSD student has an Individual Learning Plan (ILP). ILPs are developed jointly between students, teachers and parents. ILPs enable students to learn at their own pace. To move to the next level in the curriculum requires students to demonstrate

proficiency with the identified skills and knowledge at that particular level, prior to moving to the next level.

- The superintendent and senior leaders use a community-wide, highly participatory consensus approach, called Onward to Excellence, to set organizational values, short and long-term directions, and performance expectations. Twice-a-month teleconference calls with stakeholders at remote sites and in-service programs provide opportunities for senior leaders to reinforce organizational values, directions, and expectations and to promote ethical values, faculty and staff empowerment, innovation, and organizational learning.
- CSD's Anchorage House, a short-term residential program, prepares students to transition from traditional school-based, small community-based environments to independent life in higher education and/or work. The Anchorage House four-phase program is integrated with the content standards and specifically addresses personal and social skills, health, career development, and community service. The program provides students with job-shadowing opportunities in the district's five student outcome areas, including post-secondary school, full-time employment, service learning, entrepreneurial, and vocational.
- To strengthen its key communities, CSD led the formation of the state's Quality Schools Coalition to promote educational reform. CSD provides training on its approaches to education to school districts in Alaska and in other states. The district also established the Cultural Heritage Week to celebrate local cultures and to teach students about their heritage.
- CSD reduced the faculty turnover rate from an average of 55 percent during 1975-1994 to an average of 12 percent during 1995-2000. Isolated working conditions contribute to faculty turnover despite high levels of satisfaction that range from 75 to 81 percent on a national satisfaction survey. CSD has a performance-based pay component and provides flexible working conditions, job rotation, job share contracts, and a high degree of empowerment to counter the effects of working in remote isolated areas.
- CSD provides 30 days of training annually for faculty, twice the number offered by any other school district in the state. Training facilitates alignment in action plans, organizational performance goals, and legal requirements. Training addresses how to assess student needs, instruct and support students, use ILPs, monitor learning, analyze results, and determine opportunities to improve student learning.
- CSD uses technology to enhance student learning, to improve student technology skills, and to improve the efficiency of its academic and administrative operations. Through aggressive pursuit of grant funding, the district increased the number of computers from 2 per 27 students in 1994 to 21 per 27 students in 2001. In addition, when students reach Level IV in all content standards, they receive a personal wireless laptop computer, a vital means of communication for students living in

remote sites. Overall student use of the Internet increased from 5 percent in 1998 to 93 percent in 2001.

- In 2000, 97 percent of the eligible students in CSD participated in Anchorage House. In addition, Anchorage House serves students from other school districts in Alaska and the lower 48 states. Participation among other districts rose from 27 in 1996 to 65 in 2000.
- CSD increased funding from grants from \$100,000 in 1995 to \$700,000 in 2001. In addition, the district serves as fiscal agent for \$2 million of grants it obtained and administers to assist other school districts. CSD generated more than \$1 million through fund balances in its operating budgets over the past seven years, providing an effective buffer to offset potential decreases in grant funding and to provide flexibility in planning major expenditures.