

4/2/10
PHYLLIS
CARLSON
DIRECTOR
OF
RURAL ED.

Louie Flora

From: Louie Flora
Sent: Thursday, April 01, 2010 12:21 PM
To: 'phyllis.carlson@alaska.gov'; 'john.moller@alaska.gov'
Cc: 'Herman, Marcy J (EED)'
Subject: FW: Update on Education in Rural Alaska tomorrow - Any questions from members?

One member of House Education has expressed that they are particularly interested in your take on the applicability of GPS (HB 297/SB 224) for rural Alaskan students.

From: Louie Flora
Sent: Thursday, April 01, 2010 11:17 AM
To: lhsclaf+houseeducationcommittee@legis.state.ak.us
Subject: Update on Education in Rural Alaska tomorrow - Any questions from members?

I have spoken to Phyllis Carlson, the Director of Rural Education in the Dept. of Education and Early Development and she told me that it would be beneficial to her presentation tomorrow if she could receive questions from the committee in advance of the hearing. Please e-mail me if you have any questions on the subject of Education in Rural Alaska or the position of Director of Rural Education so that I can forward these along to the Director.

Thanks!

Louie Flora
House Education Committee Aide,
Representative Paul Seaton, Chairman
(907) 465-3923

Focus of Office for the Rural Education is to:

- Work with the State System of Support Teams,
- Work with EED and school districts to implement the State Cultural Standard,
- Identify organizations and individuals to make up a Rural Education Advisory Board/Commission,
- Serve on the Suicide Prevention Council on behalf of EED.

Visited the following rural school districts to date:

- **Yukon Flats:** Ft Yukon in conjunction with regional school board meeting;
- **Yupit District:** Akiachak, Akiak, and Tuluksak, with SSOS;
- **Lower Kuskokwim:** Qipnuk, Napaskiak; **Lower Yukon:** Alakanuk with Governor and Legislative facility visit;
- **Yukon/Kuskokwim:** In-Service at Fairbanks with all their schools;
- **North Slope:** Barrow to attend community meeting (Tumitchiat) exploring ideas for preparing locals to meet the workforce needs of the region.

Attended the:

- Alaska Federation of Natives Convention Oct. 2009; Announcement of Hiring
- State Board of Education meetings Dec. 2009, March 2010
- Suicide Prevention Summit held in Anchorage in January, 2010.
- Suicide Prevention Council meetings in Dillingham/Nov.'09; Anchorage/Jan.'10
- EED Winter Conference where I facilitated a Round Table discussion regarding the Cultural Standards: how schools are using them, barriers to using them.
- EED Principal Coaching Project in Anchorage
- Avant Garde Reception in Anchorage on behalf of EED
- Meeting with Alaska Educational Innovations Network/UAA
- Meeting with the Legislative Rural Caucus
- UAA showing of "For the Rights of All: Ending of Jim Crow in Alaska"
- Rural Sub-Cabinet meetings with the Commissioner
- Teleconference with the Superintendents and EED leadership
- Middle School Partnership Meeting in Anchorage, March 2010

Coming Events:

- Suicide Prevention Council in Toosok on May 3-5 -7th for community meetings
- Meeting with the Commissioner after the session for Advisory Board
- Attending BMEEC in April 20-24th in Anchorage/meeting with ANEA re: cultural standards
- Continued work with SSOS teams and other EED divisions
- Working with AASB and Norm Wooton re: community leadership in the schools
- Working with DJJ in Health and Social Services, Ak Mental Health Trust Authority, Community, Family and Integrated Service, and Office of Children Services to form a team that will build around the work of one community;

adequate supervision and oversight in a concerted effort to remedy that situation.”²

This Court also held in June 2007 that the due process rights of children in underperforming school districts is violated when the State conditions the receipt of a high school diploma on the successful passage of the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam, when the students in such districts “have not been accorded a meaningful opportunity to learn the material on the exam – an opportunity that the State is constitutionally obligated to provide to them.”³

Thereafter, evidentiary hearings were held before this Court in 2008 to assess the adequacy of the State’s efforts to remedy the deficiencies this Court had identified in the June 2007 Order. On February 4, 2009, this Court issued its Findings of Fact, Conclusion of Law and Order. This Court concluded then as follows:

Based upon all the evidence presented, this Court finds that the Department [of Education and Early Development], through delegation from the Legislature, is not currently meeting the State’s constitutional responsibility to “maintain a system of public schools open to all children of the State.” The schools in the chronically underperforming school districts are not constitutionally adequate; the Education Clause requires considerably more from the State in the way of oversight and assistance to those districts.⁴

The February 2009 Order directed the State to file with the Court each of the following: (1) a draft of standards that address the State’s constitutional responsibility to insure that chronically underperforming school districts are providing students in those districts with meaningful exposure to the State’s content standards; (2) a plan of action that demonstrated adequate remediation plans for students in the intervention districts

² Decision and Order of June 21, 2007 at 194.

³ *Id.* at 195.

⁴ February 4, 2009 Findings at 56-57.

for the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam; and (3) revised district intervention plans that address and incorporate as appropriate remedial measures that relate to each of the problem areas that the Court had identified in the Findings. The areas that the Decision identified as problematic included the lack of curriculum alignment, a lack of attention to content areas not covered by the State's standardized testing, a lack of attention to each of the specific strengths and weaknesses of each chronically underperforming district, a lack of consideration of pre-Kindergarten and other intensive early learning initiatives, a lack of attention to addressing teaching capacity deficiencies, and the Department's own capacity deficiencies to assist the chronically underperforming school districts.

Both parties have since filed considerable documentation with the Court. In 2009, the State was intervening in five school districts that the State had identified as chronically underperforming: Yupiit, Lower Yukon, Yukon Flats, Yukon-Koyukuk, and Northwest Arctic Borough School District. The parties' 2009 submissions to this Court, consistent with this Court's prior orders, were focused on the State's efforts in those five school districts. The Plaintiffs are not asserting that the State should be intervening in fewer or other school districts, or that the State's method for identifying those districts and schools in which it will intervene is constitutionally infirm.

The State asserts that "[s]ince 2005, the school improvement process in Alaska has been moving forward by leaps and bounds."⁵ It maintains that it has demonstrated that it has fully complied with this Court's February 2009 Order, and now has in place a

⁵ State's Memo. in Support of Filings Required by the February 4, 2009 Decision at 1.

system of accountability and oversight that meets its constitutional obligations. Accordingly, it asks this Court "to find the State in compliance with Section 1 of Article VII of the Alaska Constitution, and dismiss this case."⁶ The Plaintiffs disagree. They "urge the Court to find the State in continued noncompliance" with the Education Clause. And the Plaintiffs urge this Court "to appoint a Special Master to determine the specific, targeted educational resources necessary to bring the State into compliance with its constitutional obligations."⁷ In response, the State asserts that continuing this litigation is unnecessary because "the State has more than met this Court's specifications for state oversight of education."⁸ And it asserts that "if further proceedings are necessary, they should be in front of this Court," and not before a special master.⁹

Discussion

This Court has carefully reviewed all of the parties' submissions from 2009. Based upon that review, this Court finds that the State has not demonstrated to this Court that the State is in full compliance with its constitutional obligations under the Education Clause. This Court finds that the State has not demonstrated that children in chronically underperforming school districts in this state are being accorded a

⁶ *Id.* at 40.

⁷ Plaintiffs' Response to State's Memorandum in Support of Filings Required by the February 4, 2009 Decision at 39.

⁸ *Id.* at 53.

⁹ *Id.* at 49.

"meaningful opportunity to acquire proficiency in the subject areas tested by the State and meaningful exposure to other content areas in the State's education standards."¹⁰

The lack of an aligned curriculum persists in the intervention districts.

The State has been administering statewide assessments of student achievement for over 20 years. Five years ago – in 2005 – the State began administering Standards-Based Assessments (SBAs) in grades three through ten. The SBAs are a comprehensive testing system to assess student proficiency in reading, writing and math, and most recently, in science. The SBAs are fully aligned with the State's instructional content standards in each of those subject areas. The parties in this case have agreed that the State has adopted constitutionally sound instructional content standards and testing criteria.¹¹

This Court's June 2007 Decision held that the State must accord to each child a meaningful opportunity to achieve proficiency in the subject areas tested by the State, and that it had failed to do so in certain chronically underperforming school districts. One critical component that this Court found was lacking at that time was an alignment between the curriculum being taught to the students in certain districts and the State's instructional content standards. This Court first made clear the State's constitutional obligation in this regard nearly three years ago:

If generations of children within a school district are failing to achieve proficiency, if a school or a district has not adopted an appropriate curriculum to teach language arts and math that is aligned to the State's performance standards, if basic learning is not taking place for a

¹⁰ Decision and Order of June 21, 2007 at 194.

¹¹ *Id.* at 27.

substantial majority of school's children, then the Constitution places the obligation upon the Legislature to insure that the State is directing its best efforts to remedy the situation.¹²

To date, the State has not demonstrated that the students in the chronically underperforming school districts in which the State has intervened are being given instruction on the material that is being tested on the State's SBAs. Indeed, in its 2009 filings with this Court, the State acknowledges "at this time, we cannot say that each intervention district has a curriculum fully aligned with the content standards."¹³

The State has elected to place the responsibility for curriculum selection and alignment on each of the underperforming school districts in which it has intervened. The State has concluded that "having each district be responsible for its own alignment is a good thing for education and this is the direction that the Department has chosen to go."¹⁴ The State asserts that having each district develop its own aligned curriculum "is at the heart of the creative, 'brainstorming' process that excites and energizes a teacher" and that if the State were to provide an aligned curriculum to a district it would lead "to a sterile, bureaucratized education program that would increase teacher dissatisfaction and accelerate turnover."¹⁵

The State's delegation of curriculum alignment to chronically underperforming school districts is not constitutionally precluded, so long as the State is making its best efforts to insure that each such district is receiving the support and oversight it needs to

¹² June 2007 Decision and Order at 188.

¹³ State's Memorandum in Support of Filings Required by the February 4, 2009 Decision at 13.

¹⁴ State's Reply in Support of Filings Required by the February 4, 2009 Decision at 41.

¹⁵ *Id.* at 43. *But cf.* June 2007 Decision and Order at 118.

promptly complete this task. But the SBAs have now been administered since 2005, and yet the State has indicated that the curriculum alignment process in the intervention districts is far from complete and that it intends to allow the intervention districts an unspecified amount of additional time "to complete the alignment task in increments and on an expanded timeline."¹⁶

The State's continued delay in achieving curriculum alignment in the chronically underperforming school districts is not constitutionally acceptable. The Plaintiffs have persuasively argued that if each small school district is expected to select its own curriculum and align that curriculum to the State's standards, then there needs to be considerably greater technical support provided to each district to enable that district to promptly complete this task. Further, this Court finds that unless and until a chronically underperforming school district can fully complete those tasks, during the interim the State must immediately provide that district with access to a fully aligned curriculum together with adequate professional training so that that curriculum can effectively be used in the district's classrooms.¹⁷ The materials submitted to this Court in 2009 demonstrate that the intervention districts have been requesting considerably more help from the State in order to fully align their curriculum, but for whatever reason, that additional assistance has not been provided to them. For example, the Lower Yukon School District's draft District Improvement Plan (DIP) for 2009-2010 repeatedly states in bold, "LYSD requests that EED make available to districts a clearinghouse of

¹⁶ *Id.* at 41, n.121.

¹⁷ See June 2007 Decision and Order at 16, ¶22.

resources and instructional practices that are not only research-based but aligned to Grade Level Expectations, as well."¹⁸

In light of the foregoing, this Court finds that the State is failing to meet its constitutional obligation to maintain schools in the chronically underperforming school districts because the State has failed to date to insure that those districts have teachers that are trained to teach a curriculum that is aligned to the State's standards in math, reading, writing and science. As this Court stated in June 2007, the State "must insure that its educational standards are being implemented at the local level so that all children within this state receive their constitutional entitlement to the opportunity for an adequate education."¹⁹ To date, nearly three years later, this has not yet been achieved.

The State's efforts to insure meaningful exposure to the other content standards in the intervention districts has been inadequate.

Each of the many educators who have testified in this case have acknowledged that a student that receives instruction solely in math, reading, writing and science is not receiving an adequate education. To this end, the State developed content standards in several other subject areas apart from those tested on the SBAs, which include geography, government and citizenship, history, skills for a healthy life, arts, technology, employability, library/information literacy and world languages.²⁰ In the June 2007 decision, this Court recognized that to be constitutionally adequate, a public school

¹⁸ Ex. 2609 at 63691, 63693, 63695.

¹⁹ June 2007 Decision and Order at 186.

²⁰ *Id.* at 13.

education should address these other subjects, and held that "the State must insure that each school district has a demonstrated plan to provide children ... meaningful exposure on the remaining content standards."²¹

The State asserts that it has taken appropriate action to address this portion of the June 2007 Decision because it has adopted a draft of standards concerning meaningful exposure to the other content standards and it has informed the intervention districts that they needed to address these other content standards in their DIPs.²²

Although the State has taken some action with respect to this issue, the State has not yet demonstrated adequate compliance with this portion of the Court's June 2007 decision. The State's 2009 submissions to this Court do not demonstrate that each of the intervention school districts has a demonstrated plan to provide children with meaningful exposure to the remaining content standards. With the exception of the draft DIP from Northwest Arctic Borough School District, each of the other plans submitted from the intervention districts falls far short of demonstrating a plan to provide the children within the district with meaningful exposure to the remaining content standards. The draft DIP for Yupiit was left completely blank in the space for the district to describe the means by which it will ensure students receive meaningful exposure to content areas not tested by the State.²³ And the Yukon Flats School District's draft plan

²¹ *Id.* at 189.

²² State's Reply in Support of Filings Required by the February 4, 2009 Decision at 39.

²³ Ex. 2608 at 63757.

simply states that the district action to address the other content standards consists of a "district-wide curriculum cycle" with "instruction and collaborative meetings."²⁴

The State's 2009 briefing asserts that "in the future, the Department will monitor intervention districts regarding meaningful exposure for these content areas."²⁵ To date, the State has drafted standards that define meaningful exposure and it has sent a directive to the intervention districts to include meaningful exposure to the additional content areas in their DIPs. This Court's February 2009 decision required that the State draft standards that "address the State's constitutional responsibility to insure that chronically underperforming school districts are providing students in those districts with meaningful exposure to the State's content standards."²⁶ The State's submissions on this issue since that date are inadequate to demonstrate compliance with this component of that decision. This Court's February 2009 decision can not reasonably be interpreted to require only the drafting of an operational definition of meaningful exposure, together with the provision of a list of resources to school districts for content areas that are not tested by the State.²⁷ Rather, this Court intended by that order that the State direct its best efforts to insure that students in chronically underperforming school districts are actually being accorded meaningful exposure to the State's other instructional content areas.

²⁴ Ex. 2610 at 63419.

²⁵ State's Memorandum at 37.

²⁶ February 2009 Decision at 57-58.

²⁷ See Ex. 2637.

The State's submissions regarding the HSGQE Remediation Plans are inadequate.

The February 2009 Decision directed the State to "file with this Court a plan of action that addresses the concerns identified in these Findings with respect to the adequacy of the remediation plans in the intervention districts for the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam."²⁸ The State's 2009 submissions demonstrate that the State made some effort to address this topic with the intervention districts. See Exhibit 2641 at 63820-63821. But the Department has not demonstrated that it is providing adequate oversight and support to each of the intervention districts on this issue.

The Court does find that the draft DIP submitted from Northwest Arctic Borough School District demonstrates appropriate attention to this issue by that school district. See Ex. 2612 at 63620-63645. But even with that district, the record is silent as to the support and oversight, if any, that the Department is according to that district to insure that the plans the district submitted are being effectively implemented and that the State is providing that district with appropriate technical assistance to that end. In the other four intervention districts, the State has not adequately demonstrated that individual remediation plans are in place for each of the district's students who are not proficient in one or more of the subjects tested on the HSGQE. Indeed, the State's submissions indicate that while each district is expected to develop an individual remediation plan for each student, "details of each plan must be complete, and submitted to EED upon request, before December 15 each year for all students not proficient in all three sections of the fall exam." It is unclear from this language – in which only some of the

²⁸ February 2009 Decision at 58.

plans will be sent to the Department, and then only at the Department's request -- whether the Department has made any effort to actually review the HSGQE remediation plans of the intervention districts. In short, the State has failed to demonstrate that individual remediation plans have been developed for each student who has not achieved proficiency in each of the intervention districts and that those plans are actually being effectively implemented. Given that these districts are in intervention status due to chronic underperformance, the Department must provide considerably more in the way of technical support and guidance to each such district so as to insure that this component of the Court's February 2009 order is fully effectuated. For example, this might include the designation of one or more individuals at EED with the responsibility of overseeing all of the remediation plans in the intervention districts, who would also be available to provide technical assistance and guidance to each of the designated professionals for the students with respect to those remediation plans.

The State has failed to adequately address teacher retention and capacity.

It is undisputed that teacher turnover and teacher capacity are significant problems in the chronically underperforming school districts. Clearly, the constitutional requirement to "maintain a system of public schools" requires that there be a capable teaching staff in those schools. The State's 2009 submissions do not demonstrate that it has adequately addressed this concern.

In this Court's view, it could be very helpful to the intervention districts and the State if the State were to provide the resources to interview each of the teachers in the intervention districts at the end of each school year as to that teacher's reasons for

staying or leaving the district, and also asked each teacher to identify any specific additional resources or support that he or she seeks – be it in the classroom, with housing, with the district office, with EED, or in the community. To be most useful, the intervention districts would be closely involved in both the development of the interview questions and the analysis of the interview results. With this information in hand each year, the State would be in a better position to more effectively assist each of the intervention districts in addressing teacher turnover and teacher capacity in that district.

Further, as noted above, the State needs to insure not only that curriculum materials aligned with the State's standards are available to the teaching staff at each intervention districts, but also that the teachers are provided adequate instructional support and technical assistance so as to insure that that curriculum will actually be effectively taught in the classrooms. The State's 2009 filings indicate that the State has been making efforts to address teacher capacity, through Leadership Institutes as well as with technical assistance coaches, content support specialists, and teacher mentors in the intervention districts. And yet until the State insures that an aligned curriculum is available for all of the teaching staff in the intervention districts to effectively use, it would seem that these other efforts would be considerably less likely to significantly impact student achievement.

The Draft DIPs that were submitted do not comply with this Court's February 2009 Order.

In May 2009, the Department submitted draft DIPs prepared by each of the five intervention districts. As the Department itself acknowledged, "several districts' plans

required considerable additional work."²⁹ With the exception of the Northwest Arctic Borough School District's draft DIP, the draft DIPs do not adequately address the concerns identified by this Court in the February 2009 Decision. In short, four of the draft DIPs filed by the Department are not "revised district intervention plans that address and incorporate as appropriate remedial measures related to each of the problem areas identified in these Findings."³⁰ Considerably more work is needed for these plans to demonstrate compliance with this Court's February 2009 Order than what was submitted to the Court. Perhaps this work has now been completed, and the Court-ordered plans can be promptly filed. In its May 2009 filing with this Court, the Department indicated that it would be working with the intervention districts "over the next several weeks regarding the content of the final I-DIP's." Given that the State has elected to delegate the drafting of the DIPs to each intervention district, it would appear that the intervention districts could each benefit from considerably more technical assistance from the State in completing those plans. As of yet, the State has not demonstrated that the intervention districts each have appropriate DIPs actually in place that address the constitutional deficiencies set forth in this Court's February 2009 decision.

Conclusion

Based on the current record before this Court, the State has failed to demonstrate that it has complied in full with its constitutional obligation to "maintain a

²⁹ State's Memorandum in Support of Filings at 7.

³⁰ February 2009 Decision at 58. See *supra* pps. 2-3.

system of public schools open to all children of the State."³¹ The State has not demonstrated that children in the chronically underperforming districts in this state are being accorded a meaningful opportunity to learn the material that is being tested on the State's assessments for reading, writing, math and science. Nor has the State demonstrated that children in those districts are being accorded meaningful exposure to the State's other content standards. And the State has not demonstrated that individual remediation plans are in place in each of the intervention districts to assist each of those students who have not achieved proficiency on the HSGQE. Dismissal of this action at this time is not warranted.

This Court rejects the Plaintiffs' proposal to appoint a special master at this time. The Court remains hopeful that the inadequacies identified in this decision can be promptly remedied by the State without extensive further hearings. However, in the event that these continuing constitutional violations cannot be promptly remedied after this Order, then the Plaintiffs may renew their request for a special master.

In evaluating the State's responses at this time, this Court returns once again to the language of the Alaska Constitution, which places the responsibility "to maintain a system of public schools open to all children of the State" squarely upon the Legislature – not upon the Department of Education and Early Development and not upon local school districts. To date, the State has not demonstrated that the delegation of this responsibility to school districts that have been identified as chronically underperforming, but which do not appear to have been accorded adequate assistance and oversight, will result in compliance with this constitutional responsibility.

³¹ Alaska Constitution, Article VII, Section 1.

In light of the foregoing, IT IS ORDERED as follows:

Within 60 days of the date of this Order's distribution, the State shall file and serve each of the following:

1. A detailed plan as to how an aligned curriculum in each of the SBA-tested subject areas – math, writing, reading, and science – shall be taught in each of the intervention districts beginning in the fall of 2010. This plan will include a provision for adequate professional development to each of the teaching staff with respect to that curriculum.

2. A comprehensive review of the meaningful exposure to each of the other content areas that is currently offered to school children in each of the intervention districts, an identification of any deficiencies in that regard, and a detailed plan for each district as to how to address those deficiencies.

3. Detailed individual remediation plans for each junior and senior high school student in each of the intervention districts who has not yet achieved proficiency on one or more sections of the HSGQE. These plans shall be filed in a manner that protects student confidentiality.

4. District Improvement Plans for each of the intervention districts that adequately address the problem areas identified in this Court's February 2009 decision: curriculum alignment, content areas not covered by the State's standardized testing, ascertainment of the specific strengths and weaknesses of each chronically underperforming district, attention to pre-Kindergarten and other intensive early learning initiatives, and attention to teaching capacity deficiencies.

5. An update on the status of any specific efforts at the Yupiit School District. In its September 2009 filing, the Department indicated its intent to take additional steps to strengthen and expand its intervention in Yupiit.³²

The Plaintiffs are accorded 30 days from the date of the State's submissions within which to file their response.

DATED this 31st day of March, 2010.

Sharon Gleason
SHARON GLEASON
Judge of the Superior Court

Copy filed on 3-31-10 a copy
of the above was mailed to each of the following at
their address of record (list name if not an agency)
 CSED AG PD DA
[Signature]
Deputy Clerk / Secretary

✓ Bryner
✓ Slotnick
✓ Trickey

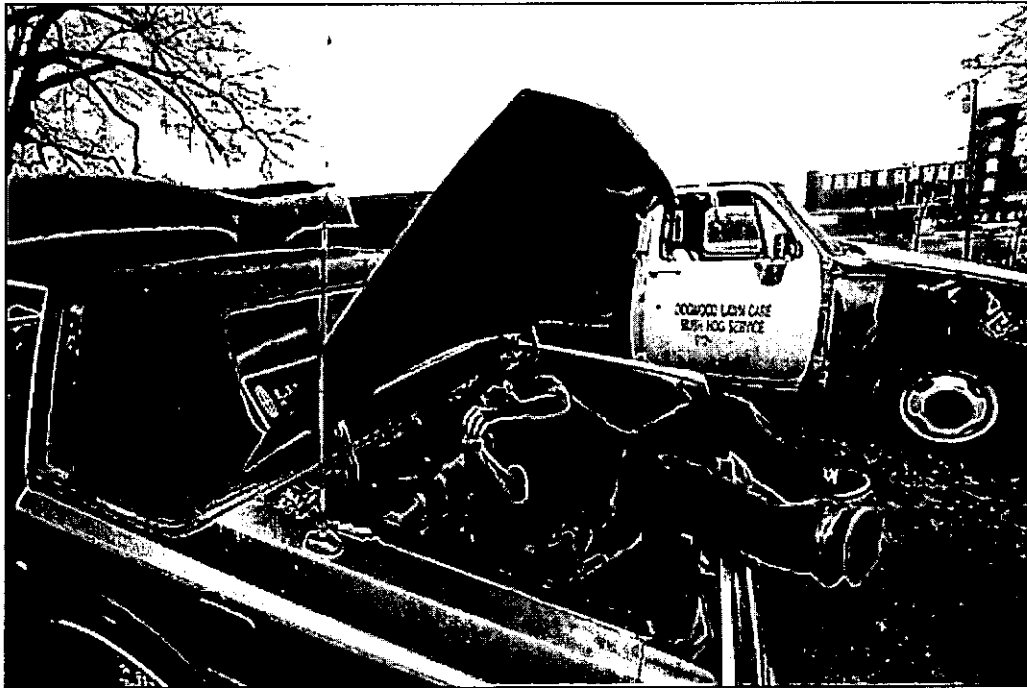
³² See State's Supplemental Reply to Plaintiffs' Addendum at 9-10, together with Ex. 2655, a draft Memorandum of Understanding.

EDUCATION WEEK

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Rural 'Dropout Factories' Often Overshadowed



Matt Hunter works on a car last week in Westminster, S.C. The 22-year-old quit school and says he has no intention of returning.
—Christopher Powers/Education Week

Some high schools are fighting the odds by employing research-based strategies.

By Mary Ann Zehr

Salem, S.C.

[← Back to Story](#)

In the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains here in the northwest corner of South Carolina, high schools' attempts to curb student dropouts may not match what many people picture when they hear talk of the nation's "dropout factories." Yet one-fifth of the 2,000 high schools nationwide categorized that way by researchers at Johns Hopkins University are in rural areas, some of them small schools where students get a lot of personal attention.

With 50 such schools, South Carolina tops all other states in the number of rural schools on the dropout-factory list, with Georgia and North Carolina not far behind. Nearly half of those South Carolina schools have fewer than 500 students.


Tamassee-Salem Middle and High School here in Oconee County is among them. It has 154 students in grades 9-12 and is located in a town with fewer than 150 people whose commercial area consists of a convenience store, a dollar store, three churches, and a gas station. The school's challenge of graduating students illustrates that it's no simple endeavor to help them see the relevance of an education.

"We have generational poverty, a lack of aspirations," said Michael Lucas, the superintendent of the 10,400-student Oconee County school district.

Besides Tamassee-Salem, the county's West-Oak Senior High School, which enrolls about 1,000 students, is also on the rural dropout-factory list. The district's two other high schools are rural but didn't make the cutoff point for the list. The lion's share of students in all four schools are white, many of them poor. Mr. Lucas said the parents and grandparents of some children in Oconee County didn't finish high school so many of the current crop of students think, "Why should I?"

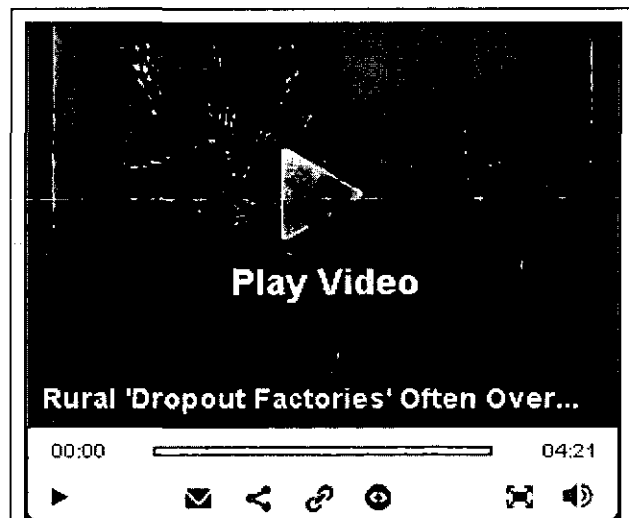
Despite such sentiments, the district is working to ensure that children read by 3rd grade to help them be successful over the long term, he said. The district also spent federal economic-stimulus aid this school year on hiring "adequate-yearly-progress coaches" who monitor struggling students and track them down if they miss school. If students fail a class, they can make it up online as part of a credit-recovery program.

In an area with a lot of youths who prefer to work with their hands rather than read books, the county has strong career and technical institutions. The district also runs an alternative school, charged with helping students at risk of dropping out get back on track.

The 2004 report "**Locating the Dropout Crisis**" first drew attention to a list of about 2,000 high schools that researchers considered to be dropout factories—"an institution that does a good job of systematically producing dropouts," said Thomas C. West, a University of Chicago researcher who is affiliated with the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University, which put out the report.

Since the inception of the list, most of the attention to the nation's dropout problem has been on urban schools, where the average graduation rate for the class of 2006 was 58.7 percent, compared with 73.1 percent in rural schools, according to *Diplomas Count 2009*.

Mr. West says the high number of rural dropout factories in South Carolina, likely results from the lack of jobs and persistent poverty. Still, he sees an advantage to working on the dropout crisis in rural vs. urban areas: Schools have fewer students, and "you can put more emphasis on what's going on in their lives."



Different Measures

Historically, the inhabitants of Tamassee and Salem could drop out of high school and get jobs in textile mills. But those mills have closed, and the region's manufacturers of electronic components, fiberglass insulation, and the like want students to earn at least a high school diploma or General Educational Development—GED—certificate, educators here say.

While most of the attention is on urban high schools with low graduation rates, rural schools also struggle to retain at-risk students.

Steve M.R. Moore, the principal of Tamassee-Salem, is not happy with his school's rate for students graduating in four years, which was 75 percent in 2009. But he implores people to understand what is behind the statistic and to acknowledge steps he and his staff members are taking to increase the rate. They've seen some success: In 2007, the rate was 66.7 percent.

"The key is about building relationships and making sure the students can see they can be successful," Mr. Moore said.

While the Johns Hopkins researchers have highlighted a problem at Tamassee-Salem, others have lauded the school's accomplishments. In 2007, *U.S. News & World Report* gave it a bronze award for being one of South Carolina's best high schools. In 2008, the school was one of 25 in the South to receive a Pacesetter award from the High Schools That Work initiative of the Southern Regional Education Board.

"Unfortunately, people take the dropout-factory label as a stigmatizing term rather than a helpful term," said Mr. West, noting that the point of the label is to get policymakers to focus on the problem.

"Some schools need total reform; some may just need a lot of help. Some are doing well, but a couple of kids [in them] need extra help," he said.

Actually, the dropout-factory classification isn't based on schools' official dropout rates. At both Tamassee-Salem and West-Oak, the rate reported to the state in 2008 was 5.4 percent.

Mr. West and Robert Balfanz, the co-director of the Everyone Graduates Center, put a school on the dropout-factory list when, on average over three school years, the number of seniors is 60 percent or less than the number of freshmen at that school three years earlier.

By contrast, the graduation rate that schools report to South Carolina officials according to federal guidelines is the percentage of 9th graders at a school who earn regular high school diplomas and graduate in four years or less. It also includes students who enrolled in 9th grade for the first time elsewhere and then transferred to that school. Special education students who get certificates rather than high school diplomas count against the graduation rate. So do students who left school and then got a GED certificate, or who took more than four years to earn a diploma.



The opportunity to learn welding at Hamilton Career Center helps motivate Tyler Galloway to stay in school. The junior considered dropping out because he finds school boring.
—Christopher Powers/Education Week

The dropout rate reported to the state applies to a single school year. It refers to students who leave school during that year and don't transfer to another school.

Future Paths

It's possible to find dropouts in the district's adult education program in Seneca trying to get a GED.

One of them is Allen R. Ellis, 17, who attended both West-Oak and Tamassee-Salem high schools. He was expelled from West-Oak Senior High. Later, he attended Tamassee-Salem High but dropped out after a couple of weeks because, he said, the school didn't recognize how smart he was and told him he'd be able to get only a certificate, not a regular diploma. Because of his lack of high school credits, Mr. Ellis said, it would have taken him until he was 21 to get a diploma, which he found discouraging.

He said he had often moved from school to school because his father was in the military and had failed classes because he didn't do his homework.

With a GED, he said, "I can join the military or go to college a whole lot sooner." He now works part time in construction.

Another young adult working on a GED, Holly Galbreath, 19, says she doesn't think administrators and teachers at West-Oak, where she dropped out halfway through her junior year, could have done much to keep her in school.

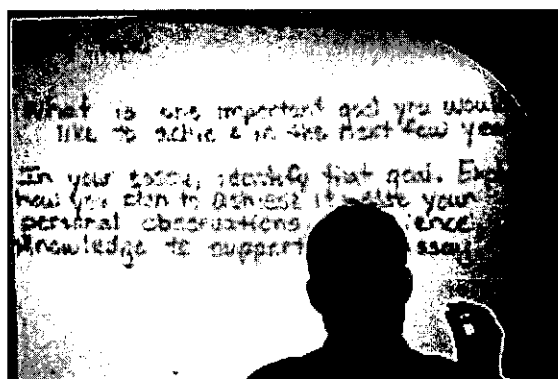
"I got in with the wrong crowd," she said. "I started caring more about myself and my having a good time than my education."

In middle school, she said, she was motivated to keep at least a C average, in order to participate in extracurricular activities, such as cheerleading. But in 10th grade, she said, she dropped extracurricular activities, skipped school, and did drugs. "I was so far behind that it was going to be impossible to catch up," she said.

But Ms. Galbreath said she now wants to go to college so she can work in a field she enjoys, such as photography. She doesn't want to work in a factory.

Right now, the adult education program has 59 students who are ages 17 to 19. Steve Willis, its director, said the program serves about 130 students in that age bracket and gives out about 75 GED certificates and 10 high school diplomas to that group each year.

Matt Hunter is not among them. A dropout from West-Oak, he's not working on a GED and doesn't expect to return to the classroom. The 22-year-old lives with his girlfriend at his grandparents' house in Westminster. He's worked in landscaping before, and from time to time his neighbor pays him cash for helping him repair cars.



Chris Richardson, 19, works on an essay about life goals in a class to earn his GED. He says he left school in part because of poor relationships with teachers.
—Christopher Powers/Education Week

His girlfriend, Hali Cannon, 18, graduated from Seneca High School, also in Oconee County, and recently brought in some money working at a doughnut shop.

"I've been happy lately," Mr. Hunter said. "Every time we need money, it pops up."

Mr. Hunter said he liked math and Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps because the teachers of that class had a sense of humor. But he disliked English class. Back in 5th grade, he had been diagnosed with dyslexia and repeated that grade. While he can read if he has to, he avoids it. As a 10th grader, he was badly injured when a car hit him while he rode a bike. He had to get around West-Oak in a wheelchair, which was difficult.

"Mom said if I wanted to quit, I could," he said, and he did.

'Whatever It Takes'

Tamasee-Salem High has a slogan this year of "whatever it takes," which Candice Brucke, the assistant principal, said means the school's educators aim to do whatever it takes to ensure each student gets a diploma.

Tamasee-Salem, she noted, is already implementing the six dropout-prevention strategies recommended in a **practice guide** published by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences.

One of those strategies is assigning advocates to at-risk students.

The school is in its third year of running a program in which well-educated retirees from an affluent community nearby mentor students one on one.

Jane Brosnan, a retired software engineer who designed the program with the principal, said she believes that by providing a listening ear and encouragement, the mentors have helped some students pass their classes.



Tamasee-Salem High is deemed a dropout factory.
—Christopher Powers/Education Week

Tyler Galloway, a student at Tamasee-Salem, thought about leaving school because "I just get bored." Principal Moore talked with him about sticking it out, he said, and he thinks he will "because I'm so close now." A junior, Mr. Galloway has passed the state's high school exit exam and is on track with his classes. He said he's had some unexcused absences and plans to make them up, a state requirement.

The 17-year-old said the chance to take welding courses at Hamilton Career Center, the district's career and technical school, has also helped him stay in school. His goal is to get a welding job at Duke Energy, which runs a nuclear-power plant close to Salem.

Mr. Moore said that in his eight years as principal, he's tried to improve the quality of education at his school. Though the school is too small to offer Advanced Placement classes, he said, students can take such courses at other high schools in the county. Last year, he said, one student took advantage of that option. This year, no one has.

He's pushed for 8th graders to take algebra, and the school is now offering calculus for the first time in a decade.

An audit last year by a High Schools That Work team found many promising practices at the school. For instance, it had implemented up-to-date technology and ensured that all teachers are certified. The team, however, said it saw a lack of consistency in the use of innovative teaching strategies to engage students.

Maureese Robinson, the director of academic assistance at Tamassee-Salem for middle and high schoolers, works from lists of students who have failed classes or haven't passed the state's exit exam to identify those who need extra help. He runs an after-school homework center and Saturday school and stays in touch by phone with parents of struggling students.

"Whether they dropped out or not [themselves], I don't think any parent wants their kid to drop out of school," Mr. Robinson said. "I can't see that in any town. Some have more control over their kids than others."

Coverage of efforts to promote new routes to college and career success is supported by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Vol. 29, Issue 27, Pages 1,16-17

Louie Flora

From: Louie Flora
Sent: Thursday, April 01, 2010 2:18 PM
To: 'Carlson, Phyllis A (EED)'; 'john.moller@alaska.gov'
Cc: 'Herman, Marcy J (EED)'
Subject: Additional Questions for tomorrow's meeting

Additional Questions for tomorrow's hearing in House Education

1. The Parents as Teachers program: What is happening with this program? Is there a high demand for it coming from parents and/or school districts? Are there federal funds for this? Federal stimulus funds?
2. Rural Hubs for education. Do you support this idea? And will we be moving in this direction, do you think?
3. What do you think about the feasibility of having traveling teachers for rural areas

Louie

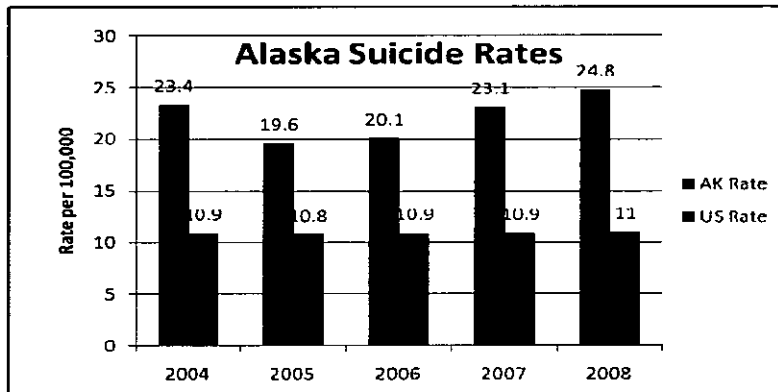


Alaska Suicide Prevention FY 2010



Statewide Suicide Prevention Council

According to a 2006 national study of suicides in the United States, Alaska ranks second among states with the highest suicide rate in the country. Alaska had approximately 167 suicides in 2008. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among Alaskans under age 50. According to the 2009 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, approximately 9 percent of high school students had attempted suicide in the past 12 months. Historically, the majority of suicides are occurring among our young people ages 20-29 years and are equally represented among both rural and urban communities. During 2008, there were also a high number of suicides among veterans, accounting for 27 deaths.



The Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics, Last updated Nov. 17th, 2009 *2008 rates are preliminary.

Since 2005, Alaska has seen an increase in suicides.

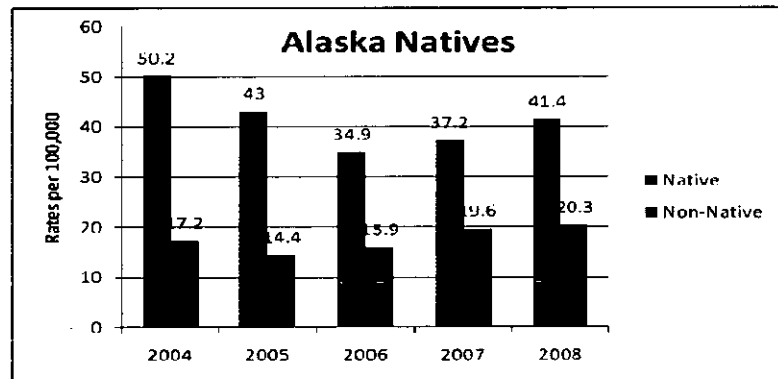
In 2008, there were 167 reported suicides in Alaska

Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics

The distribution of suicide by ethnicity shows Alaska Natives comprise 16% of the population, however they account for 39% of the suicides. The highest rate of suicide in Alaska is among Alaska Native male teens and young adults between 15 – 29 years of age. Older adults and gay, lesbian and transgender youth are also at an increased risk as well as those with chronic medical illness, trauma, past sexual abuse, substance abuse and mental illness most commonly, depression.

Alaska Natives have rates more than double that of non-Natives in Alaska. Non-Natives have a rate of 1 ½ - 2 times the U.S. rate.

Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics



Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics, Last updated Nov. 17th, 2009 *2008 rates are preliminary.

Recent Accomplishments

Statewide Suicide Prevention Summit, "Mending the Net" January 11-13, 2010

Approximately 70 people from all over Alaska gathered in Anchorage in order to network and align resources to build and strengthen local, regional and statewide capacity for suicide prevention. Future meetings are planned for further integration between State and Tribal health systems including leveraging of partnerships and resources to support communities.

On May 16th, 2009, hundreds of people gathered for the "Walk For Life" to end Inupiat suicide in Kotzebue and Bering Straits Region

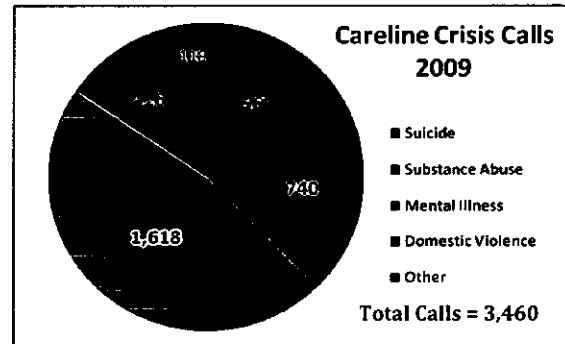
The Rural Suicide Prevention Planning Grant Project and the **Alaska Youth Suicide Prevention Project** are two projects coordinated by the Division of Behavioral Health, Prevention and Early Intervention Services section. The State awarded \$550,000 for the development of Regional Suicide Prevention Teams that will create and develop strategic plans including the **Alaska Gatekeeper Suicide Prevention Training Program** which trains instructors in the delivery of suicide prevention awareness, education and intervention approaches to a wide variety of both professional and community based health providers. Regions awarded include Nome, Kotzebue, Dillingham and Akiachak and surrounding Bethel area villages, Southeast Alaska, Fairbanks and surrounding communities. These regions are continuing to plan and implement key strategies including use of evidence-based and other best practices to address suicide in their villages, communities and regions.

Comprehensive Behavioral Health Prevention and Early Intervention Services Grant. The Division of Behavioral Health, Prevention and Early Intervention Services section also is coordinating the program which includes **Alaska Careline**, www.carelinealaska.com, 24/7 crisis hotline and community-based suicide prevention projects and grant programs throughout the state in both urban rural/remote communities throughout the state.

Over 500 people were trained as Gatekeepers in 2009

Recent Challenges:

- Socio-Economic Impact in Alaska causing financial stress, unemployment and loss of productivity.
- Alaska Military Veterans and their families have an even greater risk due to depression, PTSD and other suicide risk factors.
- Need for accurate surveillance and suicide data collection for state, regional and local communities continues to be a key challenge (Alaska Follow Back Study Report 2007)



Local and community data help us understand community based processes may rely on informal supports or services that often bridge the gap between medical models based on disease prevention and community public health models. We must also recognize the value Alaska Native traditional healing and meaningful alternative strategies which increase protective factors and promote health, wellness, connectedness and resiliency among all Alaskans.

Next Steps:

Alaska Division of Behavioral Health is working to strengthen partnerships with the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council, the Alaska Mental Health Trust and partner boards, Alaska schools, Alaska Native groups and organizations, as well Alaska's Veterans organizations. Doing a better job of monitoring higher risk populations and developing proper and adequate early identification, screening and referral resources including gatekeeper training are necessary to avert suicide crises. These initiatives and strategies are aimed at balancing identified needs and resources with the understanding that:

- 1.) *Suicide prevention requires a multi-faceted approach, integrated into Alaska's continuum of care*
- 2.) *Efforts must be targeted simultaneously at the community, family and individual level*
- 3.) *For any of these efforts to be successful, there must be community involvement. That may require an assessment of readiness to address suicide prevention at the community level.*

Through capacity development at both the community and regional level, we can expect suicide prevention strategies that utilize effective practices that will be both culturally responsive and sustainable in the long-term thereby reducing suicide in Alaska

Focus of Office for the Rural Education is to:

- Work with the State System of Support Teams,
- Work with EED and school districts to implement the State Cultural Standard,
- Identify organizations and individuals to make up a Rural Education Advisory Board/Commission,
- Serve on the Suicide Prevention Council on behalf of EED.

Visited the following rural school districts to date:

- **Yukon Flats:** Ft Yukon in conjunction with regional school board meeting;
- **Yupiiit District:** Akiachak, Akiak, and Tuluksak, with SSOS;
- **Lower Kuskokwim:** Qipnuk, Napaskiak; **Lower Yukon:** Alakanuk with Governor and Legislative facility visit;
- **Yukon/Kuskokwim:** In-Service at Fairbanks with all their schools;
- **North Slope:** Barrow to attend community meeting (Tumitchiat) exploring ideas for preparing locals to meet the workforce needs of the region.

Attended the:

- Alaska Federation of Natives Convention Oct. 2009; Announcement of Hiring
- State Board of Education meetings Dec. 2009, March 2010
- Suicide Prevention Summit held in Anchorage in January, 2010.
- Suicide Prevention Council meetings in Dillingham/Nov.'09; Anchorage/Jan.'10
- EED Winter Conference where I facilitated a Round Table discussion regarding the Cultural Standards: how schools are using them, barriers to using them.
- EED Principal Coaching Project in Anchorage
- Avant Garde Reception in Anchorage on behalf of EED
- Meeting with Alaska Educational Innovations Network/UAA
- Meeting with the Legislative Rural Caucus
- UAA showing of "For the Rights of All: Ending of Jim Crow in Alaska"
- Rural Sub-Cabinet meetings with the Commissioner
- Teleconference with the Superintendents and EED leadership
- Middle School Partnership Meeting in Anchorage, March 2010

STATE OF ALASKA

Department of Education & Early Development

Office of the Commissioner

SEAN PARNELL, GOVERNOR

Goldbelt Place
801 West Tenth Street, Suite 200
P.O. Box 110500
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0500
(907) 465-2800
(907) 465-4156 Fax

March 29, 2010

The Honorable Paul Seaton
Chair, House Education Committee
Alaska House of Representatives
Capitol, Room 102
Juneau, AK 99801


Dear Chair Seaton,

As required by Sec 14.33.210 **Reporting of incidents of harassment, intimidation, or bullying**, The Department of Education and Early Development (EED) has compiled the following data on all incidents of school-based harassment, intimidation, or bullying for annual legislative review.

The enclosed data reflects all incidents of harassment, intimidation, or bullying severe enough in nature to result in student suspension or expulsion in the 2008-2009 school year as reported to EED by Alaska school districts. This data reflects all school districts as 100% of Alaska's school districts did submit suspensions and expulsions data to the EED for the 2008-2009 school year.

If you have any questions or would like additional information related to this report, please contact me at 465-2803 or at marcy.herman@alaska.gov.

Sincerely,


Marcy Herman
Legislative Liaison

Enclosure

2008-2009 Report Harassment, Intimidation, or Bullying	
District Name	Total
Alaska Gateway	5
Aleutian Region	0
Aleutians East	0
Anchorage	497
Annette Island	11
Bering Strait	30
Bristol Bay	4
Chatham	0
Chugach	0
Copper River	0
Cordova	2
Craig	9
Delta/Greely	25
Denali	6
Dillingham	4
Fairbanks	234
Galena	0
Haines	9
Hoonah	0
Hydaburg	2
Iditarod	4
Juneau	105
Kake	0
Kashunamiut	54
Kenai	111
Ketchikan	41
Klawock	1
Kodiak	49
Kuspuk	6
Lake and Peninsula	0
Lower Kuskokwim	33
Lower Yukon	83
Mat-Su	275
Nenana	3
Nome City	56
North Slope	34
Northwest Arctic	25
Pelican	0
Petersburg	3
Pribilof	0

2008-2009 Report Harassment, Intimidation, or Bullying	
District Name	Total
Saint Mary's	6
Sitka	73
Skagway	0
Southeast Island	4
Southwest Region	23
Tanana	0
Unalaska	3
Valdez	8
Wrangell	4
Yakutat	1
Yukon Flats	0
Yukon Koyukuk	0
Yupitit	136
Mount Edgecumbe	0
Grand Total:	1721

Alaska Department of Education and Early Development
Assessment and Accountability

District Enrollment as of October 1, 2008
FY2009

District	Pre- Elem.	KG	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total KG-12	Total PE-12
Alaska Gateway Schools	3	40	42	41	27	38	43	37	35	40	30	33	28	26	460	463
Aleutian Region Schools	0	3	3	2	4	2	4	4	4	2	2	1	3	5	39	39
Aleutians East Borough Schools	28	24	23	14	26	20	18	13	22	22	18	15	17	15	247	275
Anchorage Schools	553	3747	3688	3716	3706	3807	3566	3559	3606	3669	3797	3737	3771	3915	48284	48837
Annette Island Schools	4	13	21	23	29	15	23	20	19	19	23	18	24	22	269	273
Bering Strait Schools	10	152	143	147	119	109	132	116	116	117	96	125	121	168	1661	1671
Bristol Bay Borough Schools	0	6	8	11	13	14	10	9	22	13	14	10	8	7	145	145
Chatham Schools	0	7	13	15	13	10	11	14	8	10	14	12	19	11	157	157
Chugach Schools	15	16	20	24	15	24	21	16	19	14	12	13	18	19	231	246
Copper River Schools	4	38	36	35	33	44	26	39	46	36	44	35	43	52	507	511
Cordova City Schools	7	17	31	28	22	18	43	21	29	32	25	37	34	29	366	373
Craig City Schools	6	53	55	64	76	57	65	73	53	51	49	48	48	38	730	736
Delta-Greely Schools	18	69	82	71	77	86	64	73	91	107	81	101	178	71	1151	1169
Denali Borough Schools	1	32	29	33	35	20	34	41	32	34	27	40	36	31	424	425
Dillingham City Schools	5	33	31	41	46	40	29	33	37	38	49	41	37	47	502	507
Fairbanks North Star Borough Schools	199	1141	1145	1111	1143	1055	1037	1025	1028	1061	1059	1068	1263	993	14129	14328
Galena City Schools	0	273	300	293	314	303	300	289	282	265	266	286	323	227	3721	3721
Haines Borough Schools	3	22	31	19	18	19	24	21	23	31	26	28	20	27	309	312
Hoonah City Schools	2	7	9	7	10	5	11	10	11	9	13	11	9	12	124	126
Hydaburg City Schools	2	5	3	8	5	4	8	0	6	5	9	6	3	5	67	69
Iditarod Area Schools	1	16	16	20	16	27	18	23	11	29	28	29	24	24	281	282
Juneau Borough Schools	106	355	341	354	348	359	343	361	376	355	407	480	488	363	4930	5036
Kake City Schools	4	4	10	8	4	5	12	5	5	9	0	11	13	6	92	96
Kashunamiut Schools	3	30	30	23	19	23	28	16	26	20	43	16	20	20	314	317
Kenai Peninsula Borough Schools	115	652	650	663	645	690	684	721	683	738	849	863	798	736	9372	9487
Ketchikan Gateway Borough Schools	49	167	140	141	154	163	138	159	165	147	191	163	198	189	2115	2164
Klawock City Schools	0	8	12	7	8	7	7	10	15	7	9	9	14	12	125	125
Kodiak Island Borough Schools	23	172	193	184	198	202	196	195	205	186	223	199	215	227	2595	2618
Kuspuk Schools	2	22	25	27	34	22	32	22	22	19	25	22	34	33	339	341
Lake and Peninsula Borough Schools	50	27	20	19	25	25	32	25	29	35	27	31	32	44	371	421

District	Pre- Elem.	KG	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total KG-12	Total PE-12
Lower Kuskokwim Schools	26	360	323	465	361	300	311	277	333	273	393	272	169	140	3977	4003
Lower Yukon Schools	13	192	148	170	182	178	169	178	139	144	115	135	136	177	2063	2076
Mat-Su Borough Schools	186	1181	1183	1243	1259	1195	1205	1212	1248	1313	1341	1254	1536	1134	16304	16490
Mount Edgecumbe High School	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	102	107	113	104	426	426
Nenana City Schools	11	54	58	52	55	56	47	45	57	53	64	106	359	93	1099	1110
Nome Public Schools	5	58	50	59	58	57	45	42	61	44	64	51	52	37	678	683
North Slope Borough Schools	240	132	137	115	133	107	113	99	103	110	172	105	120	134	1580	1820
Northwest Arctic Borough Schools	149	141	142	154	150	162	151	133	138	115	202	151	109	114	1862	2011
Pelican City Schools	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	1	1	2	3	2	1	1	15	15
Petersburg City Schools	6	34	39	33	42	35	36	38	43	42	28	61	43	46	520	526
Pribilof Schools	1	4	13	11	8	9	9	14	5	12	7	5	8	8	113	114
Saint Marys Schools	1	13	9	14	12	12	16	16	18	8	20	16	14	9	177	178
Sitka Borough Schools	24	97	109	108	111	106	93	73	109	97	118	114	80	96	1311	1335
Skagway City Schools	2	5	7	11	5	8	3	6	6	9	9	11	14	4	98	100
Southeast Island Schools	4	10	9	9	12	13	14	15	18	21	16	8	14	10	169	173
Southwest Region Schools	5	51	49	47	52	43	42	62	53	46	64	44	38	35	626	631
Tanana Schools	0	5	2	3	3	6	3	0	2	2	1	2	4	5	38	38
Unalaska City Schools	1	26	41	38	27	27	32	37	33	32	43	26	29	13	404	405
Valdez City Schools	11	45	54	51	42	48	58	55	54	51	59	47	69	54	687	698
Wrangell City Schools	4	16	20	21	19	23	19	27	26	33	29	30	24	34	321	325
Yakutat City Schools	3	6	7	8	6	11	7	9	11	7	15	14	11	9	121	124
Yukon Flats Schools	2	25	29	14	27	18	26	20	19	19	16	16	25	18	272	274
Yukon-Koyukuk Schools	15	93	114	108	127	115	118	102	104	91	104	96	111	115	1398	1413
Yupit Schools	1	46	41	64	39	15	32	31	34	29	34	39	19	23	446	447
Grand Total	1923	9745	9735	9950	9912	9757	9508	9442	9641	9673	10475	10200	10937	9787	128762	130685