

**SB**

**103**

<TARGET><BILL>SB 103</BILL><SUBJECT>SB  
103</SUBJECT><COMM>SEDC29</COMM></TARGET>

**SENATE COMMITTEE REPORT**  
**First Committee of Referral**

DATE: 2/17/16

FURTHER: Judiciary

Date of 5-Day Notice: 02-18-16  
 (in accordance with Uniform Rule 23)

DATE TURNED  
 IN TO OFFICE: 3/1/16

**Education Committee** considered SPONSOR SUBSTITUTE FOR SENATE BILL NO. 103

SB 103-RESIDENTIAL PSYCHIATRIC EDUCATION FUNDING

"An Act relating to school boards; relating to approval of educational programs at residential psychiatric treatment centers; providing for funding of educational services for students in residential psychiatric treatment centers; and providing for an effective date."

and recommends:

- be replaced with CS \_\_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_\_)  Same Title  New Title
- adopt previous CS \_\_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_\_)  Same Title  New Title
- attached amendment(s)
- adopt \_\_\_\_\_ Letter of Intent
- further referral to \_\_\_\_\_ Committee

Dept Abbr.	
ADM	LWF
CED	LAW
COR	LEG
EED	MVA
DEC	DNR
DFG	DPS
GOV	REV
DHS	DOT
AJS	UA

NEW FISCAL NOTE(S)				
Dept.	Fiscal	Indet.	Zero	FN #
EED			✓	1

PREVIOUS FISCAL NOTE(S)				
Dept.	Fiscal	Indet.	Zero	FN #

APPROPRIATION - no fiscal note

SIGNATURES AND RECOMMENDATIONS:	PRINTED LAST NAME	DO PASS	DO NOT PASS	NO REC	AMEND
<i>[Signature]</i>	Griessel	✓			
<i>[Signature]</i>	Huggins	✓			
<i>[Signature]</i>	Gardner			✓	
CHAIR: <i>[Signature]</i>	Dunleavy	✓			

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

716 W 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Anchorage AK 99501-2133  
907-269-0181



State Capitol  
Juneau AK 99801-1182  
907-465-4843  
800-892-4843

North to the Future

## Senator Cathy Giessel

Senate District N

### Sponsor Statement

#### **SB 103 “Residential Psychiatric Education Funding”**

Senate Bill 103 addresses a gap in the current way we provide education services to children admitted to residential psychiatric treatment centers (RPTCs).

Currently, the local school district where the licensed psychiatric treatment center is located is responsible for providing educational services. However, the education being provided in these facilities falls short of what districts provide in the schools. This is true for traditional students and especially for special education students who have individualized educational plans (IEP). Many times, RPTC students fail to receive the correct number of course hours to remain at grade level. Often the only instruction they receive are on-line only coursework with no personal or direct instruction. Students are falling further behind in school compounding their emotional and behavioral challenges. Districts without RPTCs receive these students back and bear the extra expense of these students repeating a grade.

This bill would create a three-year pilot program allowing RPTCs to contract with school districts to provide educational services for the patients/children seeking treatment for serious mental illness. Since most students in this situation have their treatment paid for by the state, it is in Alaska’s best interest to solve this problem.

The goal of this bill is to allow children to fulfill their full potential by providing stable environment and an adequate education.

I urge you to support this bill keeping children on their educational path while seeking treatment for a serious mental illness.

Chair Senate Resources Committee | Vice-Chair Health & Social Services | Vice-Chair Labor & Commerce

[Senator.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov](mailto:Senator.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov)

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

716 W 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
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Juneau AK 99801-1182  
907-465-4843  
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North to the Future

**Senator Cathy Giessel**  
Senate District N

## Sectional Analysis

### **SB 103 “Residential Psychiatric Education Funding”**

(version I)

**Section 1:** Legislative findings and intent

**Section 2:** Adds a new section AS 14.30.800-820:

#### **AS 14.30.800 Educational Programs Provided by Residential Psychiatric Treatment Centers**

This section provides for contracts between local school districts and a center for education services for children confined by court order or medical order to a center for mental health treatment and specifies the conditions for a contract.

#### **AS 14.30.810 Appeal of application for funding**

This section provides for an appeal process from the local board to the Commissioner of the Department of Education and the State Board of Education.

#### **AS 14.30. 820**

Definitions of “residential psychiatric treatment center” and “school district”

**Section 3:** Repeals the legislation on July 1, 2019 making this a 3-year pilot project.

**Section 4:** Immediate effective date

Chair Senate Resources Committee | Vice-Chair Health & Social Services | Vice-Chair Labor & Commerce

[Senator.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov](mailto:Senator.Cathy.Giessel@akleg.gov)

# Fiscal Note

State of Alaska  
2016 Legislative Session

Bill Version: SB 103  
Fiscal Note Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
( ) Publish Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Identifier: SB103SS-EED-SS-2-19-16  
Title: RESIDENTIAL PSYCHIATRIC EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
Sponsor: GIESSEL  
Requester: Senate Education Committee

Department: Department of Education and Early Development  
Appropriation: K-12 Support  
Allocation: Special Schools  
OMB Component Number: 2735

**Expenditures/Revenues**

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below. (Thousands of Dollars)

	FY2017 Appropriation Requested	Included in Governor's FY2017 Request	Out-Year Cost Estimates				
			FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022
<b>OPERATING EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>FY 2017</b>	<b>FY 2017</b>	<b>FY 2018</b>	<b>FY 2019</b>	<b>FY 2020</b>	<b>FY 2021</b>	<b>FY 2022</b>
Personal Services							
Travel							
Services							
Commodities							
Capital Outlay							
Grants & Benefits							
Miscellaneous							
<b>Total Operating</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

**Fund Source (Operating Only)**

None							
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

**Positions**

Full-time							
Part-time							
Temporary							

**Change in Revenues**

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**Estimated SUPPLEMENTAL (FY2016) cost:** 0.0 *(separate supplemental appropriation required)*  
*(discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)*

**Estimated CAPITAL (FY2017) cost:** 0.0 *(separate capital appropriation required)*  
*(discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)*

**ASSOCIATED REGULATIONS**

Does the bill direct, or will the bill result in, regulation changes adopted by your agency? **No**  
If yes, by what date are the regulations to be adopted, amended or repealed?

**Why this fiscal note differs from previous version:**

This version changes the requirement that the department adopt regulations and approve applications for residential psychiatric treatment centers to the requirement that school districts enter into contracts with residential psychiatric treatment centers and the requirement that the State Board of Education review and approve the contracts. This version also provides for an appeal process if funding is denied.

Prepared By: Elizabeth Nudelman, Director	Phone: (907)465-8679
Division: School Finance & Facilities	Date: 02/19/2016 04:00 PM
Approved By: Commissioner Mike Hanley	Date: 02/19/16
Agency: Dept of Education & Early Development	

FISCAL NOTE ANALYSIS

STATE OF ALASKA  
2016 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. SB 103

**Analysis**

This bill adds a new section, AS 14.30.800, Contracts for educational programs at residential psychiatric treatment centers. Under this sponsor substitute, a school district must enter into a contract to provide funding to a residential psychiatric treatment center for educational services provided to students that meet the four criteria listed under (a).

The bill adds a new section, AS 14.30.810, Appeal of application for funding. This section provides a center with the opportunity for an appeal to the commissioner if the local school board denies funding and to the State Board of Education if the commissioner denies the funding.

This bill adds a new section, AS 14.30.820, Definitions. This section defines "residential psychiatric treatment center" and "school district."

The fiscal effect is at the school district level.

There is no known fiscal impact for Senate Bill 103 on the public school funding formula under AS 14.17.

The bill repeals the new sections on July 1, 2019.

The Act takes effect immediately.



## AKCHILD & FAMILY

Senator Mike Dunleavy  
State Capitol, Room 11  
Juneau, AK 99801

February 22, 2016

RE: Support of Changes to SB 103

Dear Senator Dunleavy:

I am writing in support of SB 103, and the changes to this bill that have occurred since the last time I wrote you back in February of 2015. As I noted last year, AK Child & Family serves approximately 150 of Alaska's most troubled children per day in a variety of mental health services in the Anchorage area. These services include psychiatric residential treatment services, treatment foster care, individual, group and family outpatient psychotherapy, and wrap-around treatment services for children and families who we can treat in their homes to prevent the need for out of the home services.

I am once again writing to request your support for Education Funding Equality for Children with Mental Illness, SB103. This important piece of mental health and education legislation will give children with severe mental health disorders the opportunity to receive an equitable and comparable education while they receive intensive mental health treatment. These are Alaskan children in a secure or semi-secure facility licensed by the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) that provides, under the direction of a physician, psychiatric treatment services on a 24-hour-a-day basis.

Once again this year I want to go on record as supporting this legislation as I believe it will:

- Increase the educational opportunities and measurable outcomes for children with mental illness so that they can successfully transition back to their traditional school after receiving intensive and sometimes lifesaving mental health treatment.

- Allow the licensed facility, in conjunction with the school district, to deliver appropriate educational and related services provided by licensed teachers and credentialed service providers to the student while the student is admitted to the facility.
- Allow for a more comprehensive continuum of care by individualizing each student's academic plan to complement their therapeutic treatment goals.
- Provide the state real time data that will assist the state with meeting the needs of other special populations such as students residing in rural villages.
- Increase the length of time students spend in school learning and track measurable outcomes to be reviewed by state stakeholders.

If SB 103 were passed by the legislature and signed into law by our Governor, this would give my semi-secure psychiatric treatment center, in conjunction with the school district, a chance to develop a full day school program for those students who cannot attend public schools due to the severity of their mental illness. This full day school would help keep these students on track to graduate with their classmates and prevent them from taking an unnecessary hit on their otherwise fragile self image. I ask you to support SB 103 as it will improve the provision of educational services to children with severe mental illness.

Sincerely,



Denis McCarville  
President and CEO  
AK Child & Family

# *Juneau Youth Services, Inc.*

907.789.7610  
907.789.2106 Fax

P.O. Box 32839  
Juneau, AK 99803

February 18, 2015

Representative Wes Keller  
120 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Room 403  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Representative Keller,

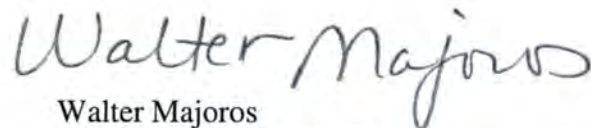
I am writing to request your support for HB 102, Education Funding Equality for Children with Mental Illness. This important piece of mental health and education legislation will assist children with severe emotional or behavioral disorders by giving them the opportunity to receive an equitable and comparable education while they receive intensive mental health treatment.

I would like to go on record as supporting this legislation since it will:

- Increase the educational opportunities and measurable outcomes for children with mental illness so that they can successfully transition back to their traditional school after receiving intensive and sometimes lifesaving mental health treatment;
- Allow the licensed facility to deliver appropriate educational and related services provided to the student by licensed teachers and credentialed service providers while the student is present in the facility;
- Allow for a more comprehensive continuum of care by individualizing each student's academic plan to complement their therapeutic treatment goals;
- Provide the state real time data that will assist with meeting the needs of other special populations such as students residing in rural villages; and
- Increase the length of time students spend in school learning, and track measurable outcomes to be reviewed by state stakeholders.

I ask you to support HB 102 as it will improve the provision of educational services to children in Alaska with severe mental illnesses and emotional disorders.

Sincerely,



Walter Majoros  
JYS Executive Director

February 23, 2016

Senator Dunleavy  
Alaska Capitol Room 11  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: SB 103 – Education in Residential Psychiatric Treatment Centers

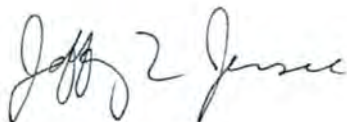
Dear Senator Dunleavy,

The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, by statute, works to improve the lives of Trust beneficiaries – which include young Alaskans with severe emotional disturbances. For some time now, the Trust has been extremely concerned that students with severe disabilities have apparently not been receiving the education to which they are entitled under the Alaska Constitution and federal law. The Trust unequivocally supports finding a solution to address this situation as quickly as possible. SB 103 is a step in the right direction by funding educational services for students in residential psychiatric treatment facilities.

It is imperative that students, parents, and school districts be able to rely on consistent expectations and obligations statewide – especially for youth who will eventually transition back to their home school district after treatment.

We appreciate the Senate Education Committee sponsoring a bill to help resolve this disparity, and look forward to an ongoing conversation about how best to provide for the educational needs of disabled students statewide. Providing a mechanism by which access to equal educational opportunities, regardless of disability, is guaranteed for all Alaska children is imperative.

Sincerely,



Jeff Jessee  
Chief Executive Officer

Dear Senators,

This letter is in support of SB103.

My daughter has been undergoing treatment for depression for nearly 8 months at a treatment facility in Anchorage. We have experienced many challenges in regards to her schooling. Some of these include: little or no contact with teachers and school staff, incorrect placement in courses (she's an honor student placed in basic courses), lack of a direct connection between counselors/administrators and students.

I have come to understand that my daughter's situation is not unique. Coming from Fairbanks to Anchorage and living in a residential treatment facility has required that she use the Anchorage School District Program. If SB103 were to pass it would allow the treatment facilities to work directly with students home districts and keep them on track to rejoin their respective school upon completion of their treatment. SB103 would also improve the connection of parents and students to school staff and student progress. I believe in-house teaching staff could better monitor student's mental health and adjust workloads in conjunction with guidance from a student's therapist.

SB103 seems like it would benefit students who are going through other important struggles in their life and I encourage your support.

Thank you,

Brian Charlton

Dear House Education Committee Members,

I am writing this letter in support of HB 102. My name is Caela Nielsen and I am the parent of a child who has received mental health treatment in both the long term and short term facilities at North Star. The stress created in a family and a child when they enter treatment is great and can often exacerbate the already pre-existing conditions requiring treatment. This is multiplied many times over when your child does not receive education that is equivalent to the education he would receive in his regular school setting. My child has fallen behind in his schooling and struggles to reintegrate into the public school system due to this. Can you imagine being a child who just received help for a serious mental health problem and then being told you are now one year behind in high school? This causes even more stress to the family when trying to convince the child to continue their education rather than drop out.

My family received the appropriate transition material for my child to return to the community, however the struggle was in getting the educational records needed for him to transition back into school. Many of the classes he took while in treatment did not align with classes being offered at his high school. The treatment facilities are in need of support in order to properly meet the educational goals of all children. My son has often times wanted to give up, but I have advocated for him and he will return to school however, it took a full week after we left North Star to transition back into the public education system, so he will now have even more educational material he has missed.

The current system for educating this population does not work. I believe by passing HB102 the education and school transitions for children receiving mental health treatment in Alaska will greatly improve. North Star has the ability to incorporate education with mental health, and when working through the treatment team process create a sound, supportive educational and transition plan for each child. Please support this population of children and pass this bill to support their educational undertakings.

Sincerely,



Caela Nielsen

Senator Dunleavy,

My name is Melanie Nelson and I am the Administrator of the Coastal Trail and Williwaw programs at North Star Behavioral Health. I am writing this letter in support of SB103. Families should not have to struggle between receiving mental health treatment for their child or their child's education. Educational services in the program right now do not serve the child or family in a way that allows for the child to stay current with school and move forward in their education while receiving treatment for mental health issues. Too often students leave the program further behind in their educational endeavors than before they entered. This is a concern as education and school can often be the one positive thing in a child's life and is definitely an area that can help them become productive members of the community.

SB103 would allow school districts to contract with facilities to provide education for youth residing in their programs. Mental health and education would be intermingled and clear transitions and educational plans developed that would go back to resident school districts. This bill would allow for clear measurable key educational indicators to be identified and outcomes tracked for stakeholders, allow for a comprehensive continuum of care that encompasses treatment and educational planning, and increase the educational opportunities of child.

I ask for your support for SB103 as it will greatly increase the educational opportunities for children receiving mental health treatment in Alaska.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Melanie Nelson".

Melanie Nelson

Senator Mike Dunleavy  
State Capitol, Room 11  
Juneau, AK 99801

February 23, 2016

Dear Senator Dunleavy,

My name is Michelle Hook and I am the Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) of North Star Behavioral Health System. Three of our facilities are dedicated to serving up to 160 children at a time in acute care and residential programs. Many of these patients have the most extreme behavioral health needs in Alaska and our facilities provide the only inpatient behavioral health beds in the entire state for children under the age of 12. Our services support families in crisis here in Alaska, so that their children are not sent for treatment out of state. We routinely receive admissions from all areas in Alaska and work with local and remote medical providers to deliver care for their patients.

I am writing to request your support for Education Funding Equality for Children with Mental Illness (SB103). This very important legislation will support children who are receiving intensive mental health treatment, by providing them with comparable and equitable educational services.

I would like to be on record in support of this legislation. My 18 years of caring for mentally ill patients as a psychiatric nurse inform my opinion that this legislation will:

- Reduce stress among patients and their families regarding a disruption or delay in their educational progress. Parents will not have to choose between getting medical help for their children or keeping them in school
- Help “normalize” the experience of suffering through mental illness. Being able to continue one’s education while receiving mental health treatment can help reduce the negative impact mental illness can have and strengthen self esteem
- Provide financial accountability by requiring school districts to send a portion of any funding that would normally be part of the funding formula from their public school at home for the specific days of school attendance
- Support licensed facilities in delivering appropriate educational services provided by licensed teachers while the student is also receiving essential mental health services which provides more seamless continuity of care

I have been so pleased to see the children move throughout their day attending school classes here in the hospital as well as receiving mental health care. I believe each of these activities can complement each other so effectively. I stopped by a classroom here at the hospital the week after the most recent earthquake and the teacher was explaining earthquakes in a scientific way. It was the perfect opportunity to educate the children while also helping reduce their anxiety.

Senator Mike Dunleavy  
State Capitol, Room 11  
Juneau, AK 99801

If the Senate and House Education Funding Equality for Children with Mental Illness Bill were passed by the legislature and signed into law by the Governor, this would strongly support mentally ill children and their families in obtaining much needed mental health services while minimizing the impact to their education. Being mentally ill should not also mean a child must fall behind in school.

I respectfully request you to support the Education Funding Equality for Children with Mental Illness Senate Bill as it will greatly improve the ability of children with severe mental illness to concurrently receive educational services and mental health care.

With Kind Regards,

Michelle Hook MSN, BA, RN  
Chief Nursing Officer  
North Star Behavioral Health System  
2530 DeBarr Road  
Anchorage, Alaska 99508

Office: 907-264-3510  
Cell: 907-312-6772  
Email: [Michelle.Hook2@uhsinc.com](mailto:Michelle.Hook2@uhsinc.com)

**Alaska Mental Health Board  
Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse  
431 N. Franklin St. Suite 200  
Juneau, Alaska, 99801**



February 19, 2016

Senator Cathy Giessel  
Alaska Capitol Room 427  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: SB 103 – Education in Residential Psychiatric Treatment Centers

Dear Senator Giessel,

The Alaska Mental Health Board and Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse have followed the discussion related to the quality, accessibility, and appropriateness of the education being provided to youth admitted to residential psychiatric treatment. We are extremely concerned that students with such severe disabilities are apparently not receiving the education to which they are entitled under the Alaska Constitution and federal law. We support finding a solution to address this situation as quickly as possible, with the primary focus being on the educational needs of our young constituents.

It is our understanding that the educational experience of students receiving residential psychiatric care varies from school district to school district. Given that youth experiencing severe mental health disorders must go to an urban center (Juneau, Anchorage, Fairbanks) for residential treatment, it is imperative that parents, students, and school districts be able to rely on consistent expectations and obligations statewide – especially for youth who will eventually transition back to their home school district after treatment. SB 103 provides that consistency.

Providing a mechanism by which access to equal educational opportunities, regardless of disability, is guaranteed for all Alaska children is imperative. We appreciate your sponsoring a bill to help resolve this disparity, and look forward to an ongoing conversation about how best to provide for the educational needs of disabled students statewide.

Sincerely,

J. Kate Burkhart  
Executive Director



1120 E. Huffman Road  
Suite 24-543  
Anchorage, AK 99515

advanc-ed.org  
888.413.3669, ext. 5775

February 4, 2016

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Tim Cline and I am the Alaska AdvancED Director. AdvancED is the accrediting agency for all education school in Alaska. Today I am writing this letter in support of HB 102 that if passed would provide educational funding for students in residential psychiatric treatment centers.

This year marks my thirty-sixth year in education in Alaska. In that time I have been an educator in three different rural school districts (Yukon-Koyukuk S.D., North Slope Borough S.D., and Galena City S.D). During my tenure I experienced what happens when a child is in crisis and needing care away from their home. I recall times that students left our school only to return at a later date after receiving some necessary care. We did our best to pick up educationally where we left off and continue on but never knew what, if any, education took place while they were away. I was always grateful to have our students back safe and sound but wondered why there was so little communication regarding their academics while away. I simply wrote off the results as if there was nothing that could be done given the circumstances.

In more recent years, I have seen what can happen when a child's education is included in their recovery plan and that education is managed in the residing facility. The success is undeniable and far exceeds any traditional education model being used in these facilities today. All indicators point to allowing the Residential Psychiatric Treatment Centers to take the lead. Teachable moments can become a part of a child's therapy and positively impact their recovery. At a time when a child is most in need of extraordinary care, they can to get it in Alaska, and I believe without sacrificing their education should this bill be passed.

I urge our legislators to pass HB 102 so our children receive the kind of support on the ground that we know can make the difference. These hospital settings are quite unique and the student turnover is often great. Regardless, this bill would put the ownership of educational progress in the hands of those who work with the children in this challenging setting. Let them customize a program for this setting. As a long time educator in Alaska, I know it will make the difference for these children.

It is also worth noting that I have already been approached by several organizations seeking to accredit their organization should this bill pass. You can be assured that those who become accredited will be delivering quality education to their students.

Thank you in advance for your support.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "K. Timothy Cline".

K. Timothy Cline  
Alaska AdvancED Director

LEADERSHIP TRAINING



# Anchorage School District

## Education Center

5530 E. Northern Lights Blvd. • Anchorage, AK 99504 • 907-742-4000 • www.asdk12.org

March 2, 2016

Senator Mike Dunleavy, Chair  
Members of the Senate Education Committee  
State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senator Dunleavy and members of the committee,

The Anchorage School District appreciates the opportunity to provide written testimony on SB103 "An Act relating to school boards; providing for approval of educational programs at residential psychiatric treatment centers; and providing for funding of educational services for students in residential psychiatric treatment centers."

The Anchorage School District is committed to working collaboratively with other organizations for the benefit of our students. We have enjoyed strong partnerships with Providence Hospital, Alaska Psychiatric Institute, Alaska Child and Family, Volunteers of America and Office of Children Services to name a few. Through collaboration with clinical care providers, we have continued to increase our educational services and supports for our children with the most complex mental health and behavioral needs.

In an effort to provide educational services and support students in psychiatric treatment at North Star Behavior Health System (NSBHS) in Anchorage, ongoing conversations with the local Educational Director and the Vice President of Specialty Education of United Health Services of Delaware, Inc. have occurred and resulted in the following improvements:

1. Updated registration process with current ASD enrollment packet;
2. Enhanced communication with parents of students in psychiatric treatment at enrollment including personal calls by the transitional counselor to ensure appropriate course placement, IEP goals are addressed, and accurate contact information is shared;
3. Facilitated communication with parent or guardian and receiving school to discuss transition plans upon student discharge;  
Scheduled weekly meeting between ASD Counselor and North Star Behavioral Health (NSBHS) clinicians;
4. Purchased and installed technology upgrades by ASD for NSBHS facility:
  - a. 92 new computers
  - b. 10 Radio controllers
  - c. Complete reinstallation of an Anchorage School District wireless network;

*Educating All Students for Success in Life*

Anchorage School Board Kameron Perez-Verdia, President

Kathleen Plunkett, Vice President

Tam Agosti-Gisler, Clerk

Bettye Davis, Treasurer

Eric Croft

Pat Higgins

Elisa Snelling

Superintendent Ed Graff

5. Increased staffing:
  - a. Sue Doherty recently named as Special Schools Principal upon the passing of Jerry Koetje in December. Ms. Doherty has 30 years of special education experience as a resource teacher, transition specialist, department chair, supervisor of special education, and an administrator. Most recently, she served as an assistant principal at a comprehensive high school transitioning students from residential treatment facilities back to their neighborhood school programs.
  - b. Transition Counselor position increased from .5 FTE (half time) to 1.0 FTE (full time)
  - c. Teacher positions increased from 6 FTE to 10 FTE;
6. Created Special Schools Office in ASD Ed Center as home base for ASD Special Schools Principal and non-teaching staff;
7. Scheduled and conducted monthly staff meetings with Special Schools personnel;
8. Conducted daily site visits to NSBHS by the principal, counselor or special education department chair;
9. Increased communications between ASD Special Schools principal and the hospital staff;
10. Established weekly meeting between the NSBHS education director and ASD Special Schools Principal;
11. Ensured all teachers are "Highly Qualified" in relevant core areas of instruction;
12. Increased instructional day for acute care students from a half-day to full day program at the request of the NSBHS director;
13. Established regular progress meetings with NSBHS staff Mike Lyons and Evelyn Alsup, and ASD staff Mike Henry, Executive Director, Secondary Education and Sue Doherty, Special Schools Principal;
14. Scheduled quarterly progress meetings with meetings with NSBHS staff Mike Lyons and Evelyn Alsup, and ASD staff Mike Graham, Chief Academic Officer, Linda Carlson, Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Support, Mike Henry, Executive Director, Secondary Education and Sue Doherty, Special Schools Principal;
15. Addressed reported staff shortages experienced by North Star Behavioral Health System that result in relocation of classrooms and increased class sizes, without prior notice and on any given day, by remaining flexible and committed to serving our students.

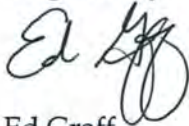
Given all that has been accomplished in providing comparable general and special educational services to students in psychiatric treatment, we believe this bill, which in essence diverts public school funding to the residential treatment facilities operated by an outside for profit corporation, is unnecessary legislation and could negatively impact the school district's ability to support our special needs students.

March 2, 2016  
Senator Mike Dunleavy, Chair  
Senate Education Committee  
Page Three

We believe we are providing a supportive educational program for these students with acute challenges. Because we are committed to serving all students and enhancing our services through communication and collaboration with community providers, we have accommodated every request made by North Star Behavioral Health System through United Health Services of Delaware, Inc. Finally, while there still exist concerns regarding best practices for psychiatric treatment and educational services for this unique population of students, we believe that school districts are in the best position to provide high quality public educational services.

Again, we appreciate the opportunity to share these accomplishments and express our concern relative to SB 103.

Respectfully,



Ed Graff  
Superintendent

Michael T. Graham  
Chief Academic Officer

Linda Carlson  
Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Support

Sue Doherty  
Principal for Special Schools