SAVING ALASKA'S SMALL OFF-THE-ROAD SYSTEM HIGH SCHOOLS

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OVERVIEW

The post Molly Hooch vision of small off-the-road system (OTRS) high schools that would educate students on par with on-the-road system high schools has never been realized. Thirty-six years after its creation, Alaska's system of small rural OTRS high schools deliver, for the most part, a second-rate education that denies rural students the educational opportunities their on-the-road system counterparts enjoy.

Changes in state education policy, citizen migration from rural to urban areas, soaring education delivery costs, and competition from other state-funded education systems have pulled the rug out from under small OTRS high schools. As a result, with few exceptions, these schools perform academically far below expectations and fail to prepare thousands of students for effective adulthood roles. The vast majority of students attending these schools are Alaska Native.

Stretched beyond their capability and unable to deliver programs that meet the academic and career and technical education needs of their students, these schools face a future that looks much like their past. If small OTRS high schools are to realize the success envisioned by the Molly Hooch Consent Decree, they need a lifeline from the state NOW.

CHALLENGES

Small OTRS high schools are challenged by low student achievement, diseconomies of scale, high costs of education delivery, high drop-out rates, and competition from state funded residential high schools and distance education programs. Additionally, the education workforce in these schools is generally weaker with fewer highly-qualified teachers and the rate of educator turnover is often more than double that of on-the-road system high schools. Teachers in small OTRS high schools are spread thin just to teach the minimal requirements for graduation and have few resources at their disposal to deliver much needed advanced academic, enrichment, and career and technical education courses.

THE PLAYING FIELD HAS CHANGED DRAMATICALLY

Whether intended or not, changes in state education policy have undermined the foundation of these schools. With the exception of state education standards and the construction of new schools, Alaska's system of small rural OTRS high schools has remained largely unchanged since its inception in 1976; however, the environment these schools operate in has changed dramatically.

When they were built, small OTRS high schools had the full support of the legislature, adequate funding, no competition from residential high schools, and the only distance

education program was the correspondence school operated by the Alaska Department of Education.

Unfortunately, that level of support was short lived. Beginning in the 1980s with the reopening of Mt. Edgecumbe High School, the subsequent addition of Nenana's Residential High School, the Galena Interior Learning Academy, and at last count 30 statewide correspondence programs operated by local school districts, OTRS high schools have lost thousands of students, millions of dollars in operating revenue, and face challenges they are unable to address.

While it is not possible or desirable to roll-back the clock on changes in our education delivery system, it is necessary and important to respond to unmet needs that are a direct result of state education policy changes.

OTRS HIGH SCHOOL SIZE DATA

Pages 8-15 of this paper identifies 131 small OTRS high schools with a total enrollment of 2,662 students. The enrollment of these 131 high schools are as follows:

57 schools have 1-10 students;

21 schools have 11-20 students;

15 schools have 21-30 students;

16 schools have 31-40 students;

22 schools have 41-60 students.

Of the 2,662 students in the above schools, 95.38% are Alaska Natives. The high schools these students attend are the smallest and most remote with the most limited curriculum and among the lowest achievement levels in the state.

Performance Data

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) prevents the release of information that may cause any student to be personally recognizable. As a result, it is difficult to obtain detailed student achievement from small OTRS schools.

The last two pages of this paper presents two standards-based assessment charts: 2011 K-12 Performance of all school districts in Rank Order Based on District-as-a-Whole Percentage of Students Proficient in Language Arts and Mathematics. OTRS schools are shown in yellow. The charts confirm that with few exceptions, OTRS school districts are among the lowest achieving in the state.

Another measure, 2012 Alaska Performance Scholarship Outcomes Report shows that few Alaska Native students were able to participate in this state program. Data collection methods and FERPA requirements make it impossible to know which school districts many students were from.

Alaska Performance Scholarship Eligibility and Recipients by Ethnicity (Sample)

Total	Public School Graduates	Eligible Count	% of Graduates Eligible
Caucasian (White)	4,764	1,807	37.9
Alaska Native/ American Indian	1,463	122	8.3

Caucasian students are four and one-half times more likely to be academically eligible for the APS than are Alaska Native/American Indian students, at 37.9% versus 8.3%.

Source: APS Report page 8.

WHAT SMALL OTRS HIGH SCHOOLS NEED

The short answer is opportunities for students.

Leveling the educational playing field for small OTRS high schools will require providing students access to learning environments comparable to those offered by higher performing on-the-road high schools and residential high schools.

OTRS high school students need opportunities to participate in advanced academics and career and technical education programs including the ability to access courses provided by large high schools, regional training centers, apprenticeship programs, and college campuses.

DELIVERY OPTIONS

Advances in technology are providing opportunities for cost effective distance delivery of quality programs to students, and many small OTRS high schools are using them to augment their programs. That said, distance delivery and technology cannot replace learning opportunities that require infrastructure, access to hands-on learning, equipment, external partnerships, larger groups of students, and other resources that are not available in small rural high schools.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE

Small rural high schools are an important part of Alaska's education delivery system and are vital to the health and stability of rural communities. It is clearly in the state's best interest to support these high schools and augment the quality of education they are able to deliver.

RESIDENTIAL LEARNING CENTERS

Regionally-based residential learning centers in rural or urban hub communities are able to capitalize on existing infrastructure such as large high schools, regional training centers, college campuses, and regionally-based employers to deliver short- and long-term academic, career and technical education programs, apprenticeship, and other programs that offer critical learning opportunities. Opportunities such as these can only be provided to OTRS high school students in residential settings. These centers could operate on a year-around basis.

BENEFITS OF ESTABLISHING REGIONALLY-BASED RESIDENTIAL LEARNING CENTERS

- 1. Students attending small rural high schools would have nearby access to short- and long-term courses and programs that their local school is unable to deliver.
- 2. State education funding would remain in a student's home district or region.
- 3. Rural school districts could collaborate and partner with other school districts and private sector organizations on course delivery and cost-sharing arrangements.
- 4. Students participating in these programs would have direct access to post-secondary technical centers, university campuses, and apprenticeship opportunities that train local students for local jobs.
- 5. Courses, including practical hands-on learning that is important to life in rural Alaska, can be delivered on a year-round basis.
- 6. Increased academic opportunities would help prepare more students for the Alaska Performance Scholarship Program.

PROGRAMS THAT WORK SHOULD BE FUNDED BY THE LEGISLATURE

In the absence of state action to address the needs of students attending OTRS high schools, four school districts have developed programs and obtained funding from other sources to meet student academic, social, and career and technical education needs that cannot be addressed in small high-school settings.

Outstanding examples of long-standing short-term residential programs are the Northwestern Alaska Career and Technical Education Center (NACTEC) operated by

Nome City Schools and Bering Strait School District and Chugach School District's Voyage to Excellence (VTE) program.

Chugach's VTE program provides an outstanding example of the power of residential programs:

- In operation for 15 years, serving over 1,700 students;
- Serves 250 students annually from six (6) rural school districts;
- 98% high school graduation rate for participants in last eight (8) years;
- 92% enter post secondary, military, or workforce;
- Collaborates with other organizations including NACTEC, Alaska Construction Academies, Alaska Military Youth Academy, Alaska Works, AVTEC, UAA, UAF, and APU;
- Over 70 business partners including Chugach AK Corp, Alyeska Pipeline, Providence Hospital, Totem Ocean Trailer Express, Conoco Phillips, AVTEC, Job Corps, and AK Native Medical Center.

For more information on the NACTEC and VTE programs, go to www.nacteconline.org and www.chugachschools.com.

VTE and NACTEC have procured and operated facilities without state support and have provided students with high-quality short-term residential programs. Additionally, they actively partner with other rural school districts to make programs available to their students.

Northwest Arctic Borough School District currently relies on a grant to operate a magnet school that includes the Alaska Technical Center and Chukchi College as partners. Together they deliver programs for students in grades 11-14 that prepare students for careers in rural Alaska. The program needs a dormitory to serve students from across Alaska. Go to www.nwarctic.org for more information on Star of the Northwest Magnet School.

Lower Kuskokwim School District operates a program called RANSEP, using grant funds from the Rasmuson Foundation. The district partners with the University of Alaska Anchorage's Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program (ANSEP) to deliver coursework that prepares students for entry into the ANSEP program. RANSEP is currently dependent on a residential boarding home program and unable to grow because it lacks a dormitory to serve more students. See www.lksd.org for additional RANSEP information.

The school districts referenced above are outstanding examples of what could be happening throughout rural Alaska. Quality programs delivered regionally by school districts could be made available to <u>all</u> rural high-school students.

Programs such as those referenced above should be supported by the state. Dormitories should be constructed as needed and residential funding provided.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO STATE POLICY MAKERS

- 1. Approve the construction of residential facilities for rural hub school districts that are currently operating magnet schools and/or residential boarding-home programs (Northwest Arctic Borough School District and Lower Kuskokwim School District).
- 2. Approve, fund, and support expansion of regionally-based district-operated short- and long-term residential programs that are currently operated without state funding (Chugach School District and Nome/Bering Strait School Districts).
- 3. Contract for regional surveys of rural high-school students, parents, educators, school-board members, employers, and community leaders to determine interest in residential programs in regional hub communities that deliver needed short- and long-term programs that meet the needs of students, employers, and communities.
- 4. Revisit the stipend amount for residential programs and fund all existing and new short- and long-term residential pro grams at a level that is equitable based on the cost of delivery.

ATTACHMENTS

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DISTRICT SCHOOLS GRADES ENROL	OLLMENT
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Aleutian Region	Schools (2)	9	10	11	12	Total HS	AK Native
	Adak	0	1	0	2	3	2
	Yakov E. Netsvetov	0	2	0	1	3	3
				To	tals:	6	5

Aleutian East Bor	Aleutian East Borough Schools (6)		10	11	12	Total HS	AK Native
	Akutan	1	1	1	0	3	3
	Cold Bay	0	1	0	1	2	1
	False Pass	0	2	0	0	2	1
	King Cove	4	4	13	6	27	25
	Nelson Lagoon	1	2	2	0	5	4
	Sand Point	5	6	5	7	23	20
				To	tals:	62	54

Bering Strait Scho	ools (15)	9	10	11	12	Total HS	AK Native
	Aniguiin	8	3	4	5	20	19
	Anthony A. Andrews	9	1	9	11	30	29
	Brevig Mission	4	9	4	10	27	26
	Diomede	2	4	2	1	9	9
	Gambel	15	12	11	14	52	51
	Hogarth Kingeekuk	15	16	16	12	59	59
	James C. Isabell	7	6	3	2	18	17
	Koyuk-Malemiut	8	4	4	5	21	21
	Martin L. Olson	3	3	4	2	12	12
	Shaktoolik	3	6	3	3	15	15
	Shishmaref	12	9	7	8	36	36
	Tukurngailnguq	10	13	13	17	53	53
	Unalakleet	6	14	10	11	41	38
	Wales	0	2	1	2	5	5
	White Mountain	2	3	3	1	9	7
				Tot	tals:	407	397

<u>DISTRICT</u>	<u>SCHOOLS</u>		<u>GF</u>	ADE	<u>S</u>	ENRO	<u>DLLMENT</u>
Chatham Schools	(3)	9	10	11	12	Total HS	AK Native
	Angoon	7	5	4	6	22	21
	Gustavus	4	3	2	0	9	2
	Tenakee Springs	0	0	0	1	1	1
				To	tals:	32	24

Chugach Schools	(2)	9	10	11	12	Total HS	AK Native
	Chenega Bay	0	2	2	3	7	6
	Tatitlek	1	3	1	3	8	7
				To	tals:	15	13

Galena City Schools	s (1)	9	10	11	12	Total HS	AK Native
	Sidney Huntington	8	6	7	11	32	25
				To	tals:	32	25

Iditarod Area	(7)	9	10	11	12	Total HS	AK Native
	Blackwell	1	2	0	0	3	3
	David-Louis	4	2	0	0	6	5
	Holy Cross	3	0	3	4	10	10
	Innoko River	2	0	0	1	3	3
	McGrath	6	2	3	1	12	9
	Takotna	1	0	1	2	4	4
	Top of the Kuskokwim	1	1	1	1	4	4
				Tot	tals:	42	38

DISTRICT SCHOOLS GRADES ENROLLMENT

Kuspuk Schools (6)		9	10	11	12	Total HS	AK Native
	Aniak	9	11	7	10	37	28
	Crow Village Sam	1	2	1	7	11	11
	George Morgan Sr.	12	8	7	14	41	41
	Gusty Michael	2	0	0	1	3	3
	Jack Egnaty Sr.	0	0	0	3	3	3
	Johnnie John Sr.	4	3	0	2	9	9
				To	tals:	104	95

Lake & Peninsula	Borough Schools (13)	9	10	11	12	Total HS	AK Native
	Chignik Bay	1	1	1	2	5	3
	Chignik Lagoon	1	0	4	0	5	5
	Chignik Lake	5	4	1	3	13	13
	Egigik	1	0	3	0	4	4
	Iguigig	0	1	0	1	2	2
	Kokhanok	3	1	4	1	9	9
	Levelock	2	3	2	2	9	9
	Meshik	3	1	2	4	10	8
	Newhalen	4	7	5	8	24	24
	Nondalton	2	0	3	1	6	6
	Perryville	3	2	1	1	7	6
	Pilot Point	0	2	1	3	6	6
	Tanalian	1	1	3	1	6	2
				To	tals:	106	97

DISTRICT SCHOOLS GRADES ENROLLMENT

Lower Kuskokwin	n Schools (21)	9	10	11	12	Total HS	AK Native
	Akuik Memorial	11	5	3	1	20	20
	Akula Elitnaurvik	12	7	2	2	23	23
	Anna Tobeluk	23	2	3	3	31	31
	Ayagina'ar Elitnaurvik	22	7	4	3	36	35
	Ayaprun	14	11	4	6	35	35
	Bethel Alternative	10	9	8	6	33	31
	Chaputnguak	16	14	7	10	47	47
	Chief Paul	12	15	10	17	54	54
	Eek	9	0	8	0	17	17
	Joann A. Alexie	11	7	3	5	26	26
	Ket'acik/Aapalluk	19	16	3	11	49	49
	Kuinerrarmiut	25	7	8	3	43	43
	Kwigillingok	13	5	10	4	32	32
	Lewis Angapak	19	6	5	9	39	39
	Nightmute	8	2	2	4	16	16
	Nuniwarmuit	3	0	0	3	6	6
	Paul T. Albert	16	8	9	6	39	39
	Qugcuun Memorial	0	2	3	3	8	8
	Rocky Mt.	9	3	0	5	17	17
	William Miller	15	0	0	2	17	17
	Z. John Williams	7	4	7	9	27	27
				To	tals:	615	612

Lower Yukon Sch	Lower Yukon Schools (7)		10	11	12	Total HS	AK Native
	Alakanuk	9	9	17	16	51	51
	Emmonak	16	10	17	12	55	55
	Marshall	7	10	5	13	35	34
	Pilot Station	9	7	10	4	30	30
	Russian Mission	10	4	7	12	33	33
	Scammon Bay	14	16	10	16	56	56
	Sheldon Point	1	1	3	5	10	10
				Tot	tals:	270	269

Source: 2011 Report Card to the Public, Alaska DEED

DISTRICT SCHOOLS			GRA	DES	<u>i</u>	<u>ENROLLMENT</u>	
North Slope Bord	ough Schools (8)	9	10	11	12	Total HS	AK Native
	Alak	6	8	9	10	33	33
	Harold Kaveolook	4	5	4	4	17	17
	Kali	5	7	4	7	23	22
	Kiita Learning Center	1	14	14	28	57	47
	Meade River	2	2	7	7	18	18
	Nuiqsut	3	4	4	8	19	18
	Nunamiut	2	6	3	4	15	14
	Tikigaq	6	7	10	19	42	28
				To	tals:	224	197

Northwest Arctic	Borough Schools (10)	9	10	11	12	Total HS	AK Native
	Ambler	10	1	1	2	14	14
	Aqqaluk	22	8	13	3	46	45
	Buckland	15	10	13	14	52	52
	Davis-Ramoth	20	10	9	5	44	44
	Deering	4	1	3	2	10	10
	Kiana	8	7	12	4	31	31
	Kobuk	4	2	4	0	10	10
	McQueen	9	11	5	8	33	33
	Napaaqtugmiut	13	11	11	7	42	39
	Shungnak	5	5	3	2	15	14
				Tot	tals:	297	292

Pelican City Schools (1)		9	10	11	12	Total HS	AK Native
Pelicar	ı	1	3	2	3	9	8
				To	tals:	9	8

Pribilof Island Sch	ools (1)	9	10	11	12	Total HS	AK Native
	St. Paul	7	1	11	4	23	23
				To	tals:	23	23

<u>DISTRICT</u> <u>SCHOOLS</u> <u>GRADES</u> <u>ENROLLMENT</u>

St. Mary's School	s (1)	9	10	11	12	Total HS	AK Native
	St. Mary's	22	12	7	6	47	44
				To	tals:	47	44

Southeast Island	Schools (7)	9	10	11	12	Total HS	AK Native
	Barry Craig Stewart Kasaan	1	0	0	0	1	1
	Edna Bay	1	0	1	0	2	0
	Hollis	0	0	0	2	2	1
	Howard Valentine	1	0	0	0	1	0
	Naukati	1	2	1	2	6	0
	Port Alexander	0	0	2	0	2	2
	Port Protection	0	3	1	2	6	1
				To	tals:	20	5

Southwest Region Schools (3)		10	11	12	Total HS	AK Native
Chief Ivan Blunka	18	11	10	17	56	56
Koliganek	7	6	3	3	19	18
Manokotak	16	8	9	14	47	47
			To	tals:	122	121

Tanana Schools (1)	9	10	11	12	Total HS	AK Native
	Maudrey J. Sommer	1	1	1	3	6	5
				To	tals:	6	5

DISTRICT SCHOOLS GRADES ENROLLMENT

Yukon Flats Scho	ols (6)	9	10	11	12	Total HS	AK Native
	Arctic Village	4	2	1	5	12	12
	Cruikshank	1	0	1	3	5	5
	Fort Yukon	11	8	4	4	27	27
	John Fredson	1	1	0	1	3	3
	Stevens Village	1	0	0	0	1	1
	Tsuk Taih	0	1	0	1	2	0
				To	tals:	50	48

Yukon Koyukuk S	chools (7)	9	10	11	12	Total HS	AK Native
	Allakaket	0	4	3	2	9	9
	Andrew K. Demoski	3	1	2	3	9	9
	Gladys Dart	1	0	0	0	1	1
	Jimmy Huntington	8	5	2	9	24	22
	Johnny Oldman	2	3	2	2	9	9
	Kaltag	2	1	1	2	6	6
	Merreline E. Kangas	1	0	2	4	7	6
			Totals:		65	62	

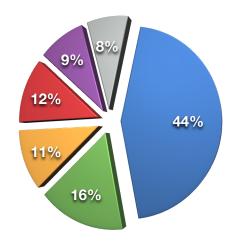
Yupiit Schools (3)		9	10	11	12	Total HS	AK Native
	Akiachak	16	13	15	6	50	48
	Akiak	12	3	2	2	19	18
	Tuluksak	9	13	11	6	39	39
				Totals:		108	105

SMALL HIGH SCHOOL SIZE DATA

Total high school students: 2,662
Total Native students: 2,539
% AK Native students: 95.38%

131 Total High Schools in Sample Number of high schools with...

1-10 students: 57 11-20 students: 21 21-30 students: 15 31-40 students: 16 41-50 students: 12 51-60 students: 10



- High schools with 1-10 students
- High schools with 11-20 students
- High schools with 21-30 students
- High schools with 31-40 students
- High schools with 41-50 students
- High schools with 51-60 students

*GRADUATION RATES 2010-11		*GRADUATION RATES	*GRADUATION RATES 2010-11			
SAMPLE: OFF-THE-ROAD SYSTEM		SAMPLE: CITY AI	ND/OR			
Aleutian East	61.11	ON-THE-ROAD S	<u>YSTEM</u>			
Bering Strait	55.00	Anchorage	72.00			
Chatham	76.92	Copper River	80.65			
Galena City	100.00	Cordova	94.12			
Iditarod	52.63	Delta-Greely	57.47			
Kuspuk	56.52	Denali Borough	50.00			
Lake & Peninsula	50.00	Fairbanks	71.21			
Lower Kuskokwim	40.86	Juneau	71.73			
Lower Yukon	42.95	Mat-Su	67.78			
North Slope	58.82	Petersburg	80.00			
Northwest Arctic	48.72	Unalaska	91.67			
Pribilof Islands	60.00	Valdez	83.33			
St. Mary's	84.62	Wrangell	83.87			
Southwest Region	50.00					
Yukon Flats	36.36					
Yukon Koyukuk	42.76					

33.33

Yupiit

^{*}Information from Alaska Department of Education and Early Development

2010-2011 Graduation Rates by Subgroup

	2011	2011	2011 Cohort
	Graduates in	Members in	Graduation
	4-Year Cohort	4-Year Cohort	Rate (4 yr)
Statewide	7,186	10.564	68.0%
Male	3,512	5,497	63.9%
Female	3,674	5,067	72.5%
African American	261	413	63.2%
Alaska Native	1,105	2,180	50.7%
American Indian	73	133	54.9%
AK Nat./Amer. Ind.	1,178	2,313	50.9%
Asian/Pac. Islander	632	854	74.0%
Caucasian	4,379	5,825	75.2%
Hispanic	368	592	62.2%
Two or More Races	368	567	64.9%
Students w Disabs	445	1,105	40.3%
Students wo Disabs	6,741	9,459	71.3%
LEP Students	411	992	41.4%
Econ Disabled	2,027	3,628	55.9%

The 2011 4-year cohort group includes all students who first entered grade nine in 2007-2008, attended a public high school in Alaska during the cohort period, and did not transfer to a private school or to a public school outside Alaska, or die before the end of the 2010-2011 school year.

The 2011 4-year cohort graduation rate is calculated by dividing the number of graduates in the cohort group (numerator) by the number of students in the cohort group (denominator).

	2011 Graduates in 5-Year Cohort	2011 Members in 5-Year Cohort	2011 Cohort Graduation Rate (5 yr)
Statewide	7,888	11.239	70.2%
Male	3,801	5,656	67.2%
Female	4,087	5,583	73.2%
African American	243	401	60.6%
Alaska Native	1,406	2,414	58.2%
American Indian	75	136	55.1%
AK Nat./Amer. Ind.	1,481	2,550	58.1%
Asian/Pac. Islander	647	864	74.9%
Caucasian	4,700	6,228	75.5%
Hispanic	401	595	67.4%
Two or More Races	416	601	69.2%
Students w Disabs	532	1,101	48.3%
Students wo Disabs	7,356	10,138	72.6%
LEP Students	573	1,102	52.0%
Econ Disabled	2,267	3,572	63.5%

The 2011 5-year cohort group includes all students who first entered grade nine in 2006-2007, attended a public high school in Alaska during the cohort period, and did not transfer to a private school or to a public school outside Alaska, or die before the end of the 2010-2011 school year.

The 2011 5-year cohort graduation rate is calculated by dividing the number of graduates in the cohort group (numerator) by the number of students in the cohort group (denominator).

