

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 408 145

RC 021 074

TITLE Summary of Alaska's Public School Districts' Report Cards to the Public: School Year 1995-96.

INSTITUTION Alaska State Dept. of Education, Juneau.

PUB DATE Apr 97

NOTE 29p.; Some figures may not reproduce adequately. For the 1994-95 report, see ED 399 117.

PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; Alaska Natives; American Indian Education; Dropout Rate; Educational Assessment; *Educational Objectives; *Educational Quality; Elementary Secondary Education; Enrollment; Higher Education; Parent Participation; Preschool Education; *Public Schools; *School Districts; School Statistics; Standardized Tests; Teacher Education

IDENTIFIERS *Alaska

ABSTRACT

This report summarizes statewide data and individual school district performance for Alaska's 53 school districts and addresses how well the districts are meeting the goals of the Alaska Quality Schools Initiative. The report is divided into four sections that address the four components of the initiative: high student academic standards and assessment; quality professional standards; family, school, business, and community network; and school excellence standards. The first section, on student assessment, includes results of the California Achievement Test, National Assessment of Educational Progress, Scholastic Assessment Test, and American College Test. This section also includes information on the number of students who passed advanced placement examinations, number of high school graduates, and number of students who received an alternative diploma or certificate. The second section includes information on statewide performance standards for teachers and administrators, licensing and continuing development, teacher salaries, and the number of Alaska hires for 1996. The third section summarizes school district efforts to increase parent involvement in schools. Six districts are currently involved in Partnership 2000, a national initiative to provide opportunities for parent and family support of student learning. The fourth section includes information on school accreditation, certification of preschool education programs, student attendance rate, 9th-grade-cohort graduation rate, annual dropout rates for grades 7-12, environmental education, and total education revenues and expenditures for 1995-96. Data on individual school districts include demography, supplemental program participation, and results of the California Achievement Test. Includes a list of Alaska school districts and superintendents and many data tables and figures. (LP)

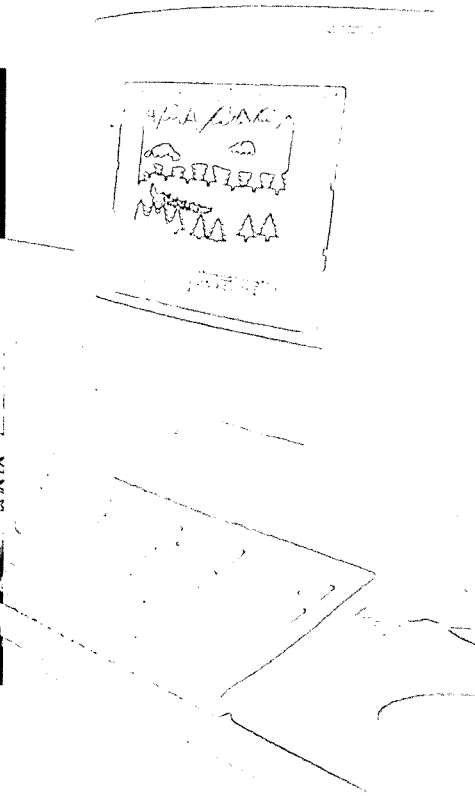
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SUMMARY OF ALASKA'S PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS'

RC

Report Cards to the Public

School Year 1995-96



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Alaska Department of Education greatly appreciates the cooperation and support of each of Alaska's 53 school districts, Mt. Edgecumbe High School, and Alyeska Central School who assisted with the collection of information that provides the basis for this report. This publication could not have been produced without the efforts of Department of Education staff in the Divisions of Education Support Services and Teaching and Learning Support.

Introduction

Required by AS 14.03.120, *Summary of Alaska School Districts' Report Cards to the Public* provides the public as well as the Governor, Alaska legislators, State Board of Education, and local school boards a report on the performance of public schools and public school students.

Information reported in each school district's local *Education Plan* and *1995-96 Report Card to the Public* has been summarized in this publication to highlight progress toward state and local education goals. Each *Education Plan* presents locally developed goals for improvement, implementation strategies, and a means for measuring progress. School and district *Report Cards to the Public* highlight district and school achievements, student academic performance, other accountability indicators, and comment from students, parents and community members. Additional sources of information used in this *Summary* to complete the profile of education in Alaska are listed on page 25.

This fifth edition of the *Summary* is offered in a format quite different from previous editions that detailed individual district results. This year's magazine format is an effort to present a statewide perspective of education in Alaska for the public and policymakers. District-specific information can still be found in the chart on pages 22-23. Other Department of Education publications, such as *Facts & Figures on Alaska Education*, could be of interest and may be requested by calling the Department of Education, Office of Information Services, at (907) 465-2800.

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Commissioner of Education

Table of Contents

Message from Commissioner	1
Alaska Education at a Glance	3
Alaska Quality Schools Initiative	5
High Student Academic Performance	7
Comprehensive Statewide Assessment System	7
Standardized Testing Background	7
Comparability of Test Results.....	8
1995-96 CAT/5 Test Results	8
Number of Students Assessed, Absent, and Excluded	8
Quartile Performance	9
Other Student Performance Indicators	9
The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)	10
Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT)	10
American College Test (ACT)	10
Advanced Placement (AP) Examinations	11
High School Completion	11
Alternative Diploma/Certificate	12
Quality Professional Work Force	13
Family, School and Business Community Networks	15
School Excellence	17
School Accreditation	17
Certification of Preschool Education Programs.....	17
Annual Change in Membership	18
Transiency Rate	18
Attendance Rate	19
9th Grade Cohort Graduation Rate	19
Annual Dropout Rate for Grades 7-12	19
Environmental Education	20
Education Resources	21
1995-96 Alaska School District Profiles	22
Sources of Data for This Report	25
Alaska School Districts and Superintendents	26

A Message from the Commissioner of Education



This edition of the *Summary of Alaska School Districts Report Cards to the Public* (the *Summary*) has been redesigned to align with the *Quality Schools Initiative*, unveiled in 1994-95. We want to build on the forward-looking philosophy and strategies of the *Initiative* that assure quality education in Alaska.

The *Initiative* serves as the blueprint for the revitalization of education undertaken by the Board of Education, Governor Knowles and myself, working with Department of Education staff, parents, professional educators and the business community.

With this *Summary* begins the data comparison process to further our efforts to improve the education experience. Through the Report Card, we can continue to identify challenges in Alaska's education system and pursue for Alaska's youth the best education possible from available resources, methodology and technology.

I hope the presentation and information of this report provides incentive for schools and communities to join the *Initiative* for quality schools in every Alaska community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Shirley J. Holloway".

Shirley J. Holloway, Ph.D.
Commissioner of Education

Alaska Education at a Glance

Statewide Profile

School District

Square Miles	685,175
State Population	607,800
Median Family Income	46,581
State Unemployment Rate	7.6 %

# School Districts	53
# of Regional Attendance Areas (REAs)	20
# of City/Borough Districts	33
# Funding Communities	274

# of State Operated Schools	2
# of PE-12 Public Schools	488
# School-Age Low-Income Children	24,309

K-12 Student Populations

(Average Daily Membership)	124,754
Change in ADM from 94-95	1.8%

Certified Staff FTE	7,387
Average Pupil:Teacher Ratio	16.9:1

Percentage of Adults 25 & Older with H.S. Diploma	86.6%
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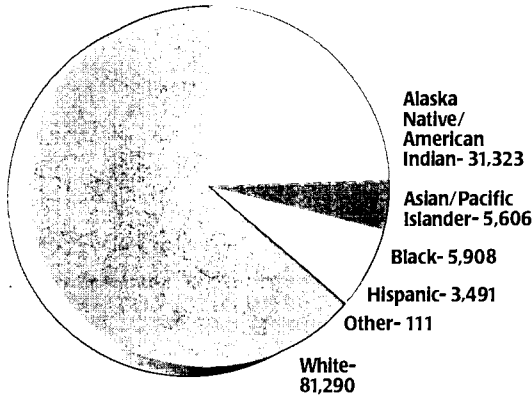
Percentage of 18-24-Yr-Olds with H.S. Diploma	80.7%
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# High School Graduates 1996	6,018
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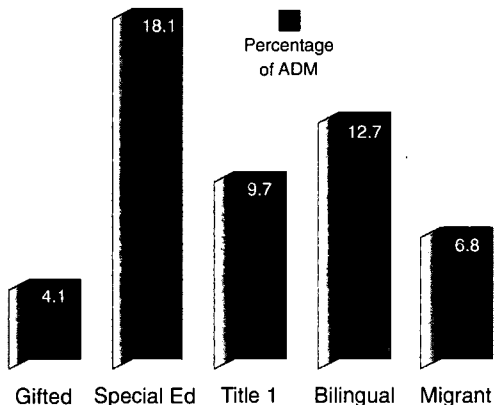
TOTAL STATEWIDE ENROLLMENT BY ETHNICITY

As of October 1, 1995

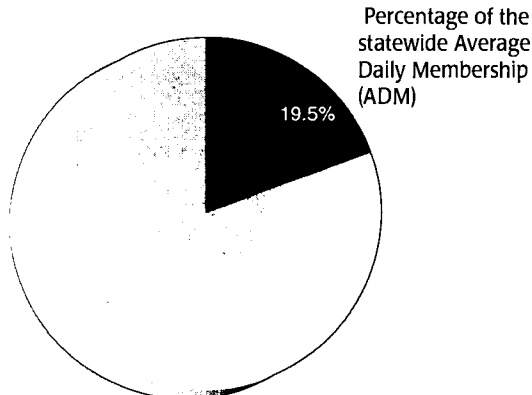
Includes all districts, Alyeska Central School and Mt. Edgecumbe.



SUPPLEMENTAL PROGRAM PARTICIPATION



SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN IN LOW-INCOME FAMILIES



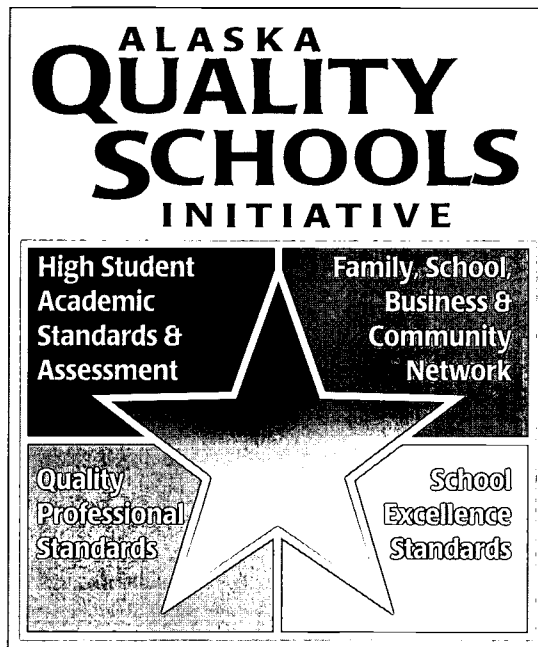
Alaska Quality Schools Initiative

As education goals have been developed both nationally and on the district level to provide on-going and ultimate measures for student achievement, the *Alaska Quality Schools Initiative* exists at the state level to improve the performance of Alaska's schools and the skills of Alaska's children.

The *Initiative* has four parts:

- **High Student Academic Standards & Assessment** that set high expectations for students and assess whether students are achieving those standards;
- **Quality Professional Standards** to make sure teachers and administrators have and maintain the skills and abilities necessary to do their jobs well;
- **Family, School, Business and Community Network** to provide support for parents, family and the business community in learning activities at home and in school;
- **School Excellence** standards to measure schools against research-proven indicators, including a formal school accreditation process.

In the 1995-96 school year, planning was initiated for Alaska's first Educational Summit. Governor Knowles, along with Education Commissioner Shirley Holloway and ARCO Alaska President Ken Thompson, called for the



summit as an innovative way to bring Alaskans together to improve education. More than 300 parents, educators, school board members, business and government leaders attended the Summit in Girdwood October 3-4, 1996.

Teams from more than 40 participating school districts and other educational organizations began building community action plans to improve student learning in Alaska's schools.

This publication addresses each part of the Initiative and indicators of progress toward student, professional, and school standards.

High Student Academic Performance

In 1993, Alaskans began developing higher standards and accountability for their public school system. As the cornerstone of this effort, the Department of Education developed academic standards and associated key elements in ten content areas: English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, History, Geography, Government and Citizenship, Skills for a Healthy Life, Arts, World Languages and Technology.

The standards present students and teachers a clear and challenging target; focus energy and resources on student achievement; and provide a tool for judging students' learning achievements and school performance.

Comprehensive Statewide Assessment System

Implementing a statewide, comprehensive system to assess the skills and knowledge of Alaska's students is one of the goals of the Alaska Department of Education, and a major component of the Governor and Commissioner of Education's *Quality Schools Initiative*. Such a system would measure student achievement in relation to adopted state standards; provide valid, reliable information to policy makers; guide decision-making; and improve instruction.

The tools which will be used to assess student progress are:

- A nationally-recognized standardized test that assesses the reading, language and math skills of students in grades 4, 8, and 11;

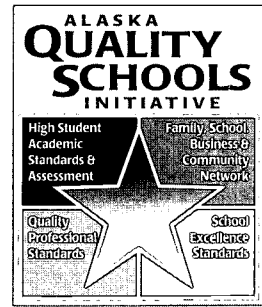
- The National Assessment of Educational Progress, in which Alaska students participated for the first time in 1996; and
- The Statewide Student Writing Assessment Program, which was piloted this year, for statewide adoption in 1997-98.

Standardized Testing Background

Alaska regulation 4 AAC 06.710 requires that all students¹ in grades 4, 8, and 11 are assessed in reading, language arts and mathematics, using a standardized test. Information from this assessment, aggregated into statewide information, provides parents, educators, policy makers and the community-at-large with a picture of how Alaska's students compare with their peers nationwide.

For six years, beginning in 1989, the academic performance of Alaska students in grades 4, 6, and 8 was assessed in reading, language arts and mathematics using the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS).

In 1995, the Department administered a new standardized test—the Survey Battery of the California Achievement Test, Fifth Edition (CAT/5). Although the assessment areas remained the same, the grade levels tested were changed from grades 4, 6, and 8 to grades 4, 8, and 11.



¹ To make sure that comparisons with national norms are accurate, some students with special needs or with limited English-speaking ability are exempted from the testing.

Comparability of Test Results

The 1995-96 test results reflect the initial year of testing with the CAT/5. Because of a number of significant differences between the two tests, a comparison of ITBS and CAT/5 scores should be made with caution.

Among the differences are:

- The CAT/5 Survey Battery has approximately half the number of test items contained in the ITBS. This affects reliability, validity and the standard error of measurement;
- The content assessed by the two tests is in many cases dissimilar. For example, the ITBS language subtest includes a spelling component while the CAT/5 does not. This means that the language subtests—and composite scores which include language—cannot be directly compared.

1995-96 CAT/5 Test Results

Because 1995-96 was the first year that the CAT/5 was used to assess the performance of Alaska students, the achievement data presented below should be viewed as baseline information. In future reports, the current year's achievement data will be presented in relation to that of previous CAT/5 scores.

Number of Students Assessed, Absent, and Excluded

For 1995-96, districts were given the option of assessing their students in either the fall, (October, 1995) or spring (April, 1996). All but six of the 53 Alaska school districts chose the spring assessment period.

Table 1 presents the number of students assessed, the percent absent and the percentage of special education (SpEd) and limited-English proficient (LEP) students excluded². These data are presented for informational rather than comparative purposes since there was a change in grade levels assessed in 1995-96 (grades 4, 8, and 11) from those assessed during the previous six years (grades 4, 6, and 8).

During the combined Fall-Spring 1995-96 CAT/5 assessment periods, 23,987 students were tested. This represents a 10.3% decrease in the number of students assessed from the previous year, largely because of the change in grades tested. Enrollment in the upper grades (grade 11, in the 1995-96 testing) is historically lower than enrollment in the lower grades (grade 6 in prior years)

Table 1 also reflects a slight decrease in the percentage of students assessed compared to enrollment at the time of testing. The number of SpEd and LEP students excluded from the 1995-96 CAT/5 assessment (1,061 SpEd stu-

TABLE 1

Number Students Assessed, and Percent Absent and Excluded
From the 1995-96 CAT/5 Assessment in Comparison to Previous Years

Year	Number of Students Assessed	Percentage of Students Assessed	Percent Absent from Testing	Percentage of Excluded Sp Ed and LEP Students
1995-96	23,987	89.6	5.7	4.7
1994-95	26,732	90.6	6.7	2.3
1993-94	26,789	92.1	4.7	3.2
1992-93	25,930	93.0	3.2	3.8
1991-92	25,434	92.1	2.4	5.4
1990-91	24,684	94.8	2.6	2.6
1989-90	23,372	94.5	NA	NA

² Based on the enrollment at the time of testing

dents, and 205 LEP students), is a two-fold increase in the percentage excluded the previous year.

Quartile Performance

In standardized tests, the scoring distribution is usually divided into four equal parts (quartiles), with the scores of 25% of the normal population falling within each of the quartiles. In reporting student achievement, states frequently present the proportion of students scoring within each quartile. *A common interpretation of these data is that if less than 25% of a particular tested population of students score in the lowest quartile, and more than 25% score in the top quartile, the educational entity is doing a good job of educating its students.*

Table 2 shows the percentage of Alaska students in the tested grades whose scores fall within the bottom and top quartiles on the CAT/5 Total Reading, Total Language, and Total Mathematics sub-tests.

As can be seen from Table 2, in seven of the nine cells reflecting the achievement of Alaska students, a higher proportion of students scored in the fourth, or highest quartile than in the first or lowest quartile. Thus, the state can be viewed as doing a good job in these areas. The two areas where a higher percentage of students scored in the bottom, rather than the top quartile, were in language for grades 4 and 8.

An analysis of district-level data continues to reflect the variability of student achievement across the state. Information from the CAT/5 and other assessments continue to show the strong relationship of lower test scores and factors such as small size, remote location, and language and cultural diversity.

TABLE 2

Percentage of Alaska Students Scoring Within the First and Fourth Quartiles³ on the 1995-96 CAT/5

Grade Level	Reading	Language	Math
4	bottom quartile: 21.3	bottom quartile: 25.5	bottom quartile: 21.6
	top quartile: 32.4	top quartile: 28.7	top quartile: 34.2
8	bottom quartile: 20.8	bottom quartile: 24.5	bottom quartile: 18.6
	top quartile: 31.1	top quartile: 23.8	top quartile: 30.2
11	bottom quartile: 24.1	bottom quartile: 24.1	bottom quartile: 18.6
	top quartile: 28.5	top quartile: 22.1	top quartile: 32.1

Other Student Performance Indicators

During the 1995-96 school year, significant numbers of Alaska students participated in other assessment programs which allows comparison of Alaska students with students nationwide.



³ First quartile range: 1st-25th percentile; Fourth quartile range: 76th-99th percentile

■ The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

In 1996 Alaska students participated for the first time in NAEP, the only assessment that makes a valid state by state comparison of student achievement. More than 4,000 Alaska 4th and 8th grade students from more than 200 schools participated in a national assessment of math and science along with students in 47 other US states and jurisdictions. Using this assessment, Alaska fourth graders achieved an average score of 224, slightly higher than national average of 222. The state-by-state scores ranged from a high of 232 to a low of 187. Alaska eighth graders achieved an average math score of 278, also higher than the national average of 271. This score ranked Alaska eighth grade students 10th in comparison to the scores achieved by the other participating states and jurisdictions. The state-by state scores ranged from a high of 284 to a low of 233.

■ Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT)

Continuing a long-term trend, in 1996 more Alaska high school graduates than ever (3,160) took the SAT, an increase of 9.3% over last year. Alaska's percentage of seniors taking the SAT was 47% compared to 41% nationwide. Table 3 presents a six-year comparison of SAT scores and participation rates. Because The College Board, publisher of the SAT, "re-centered" the scores in 1996, extreme caution must be used in making comparisons across the years. Due to the re-centering, the apparent increase in the Alaska verbal and math scores is illusory. Under the new scoring system, the Alaska 521 verbal and the 513 math scores, in fact reflect "no change," and are comparable to last year's 445 and 489 scores. The same re-centering of scores also applies to the national data.

The SAT data for 1996 reflect that Alaska students continued a six year trend by scoring higher on the verbal section than seniors nationwide. For the second year in a row, Alaska students achieved higher mathematics scores than the national average.

TABLE 3

A five-year comparison of average SAT Verbal and Math scores and percentage of high school graduates taking the test with national averages.

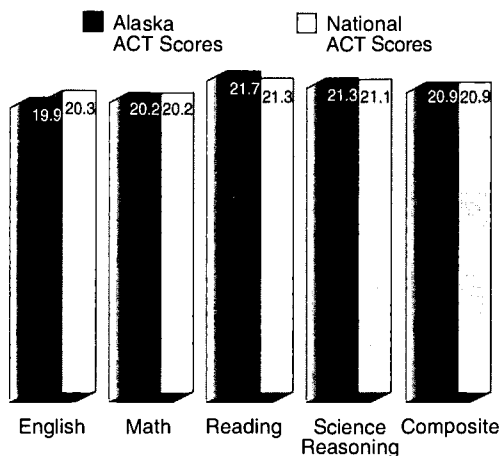
Year	Alaska Verbal	National Verbal	Alaska Math	National Math	% of Alaska Grads taking SAT	% of National Grads taking SAT
1996*	521	503	513	508	47.0	41.0
1995	445	428	489	482	49.7	41
1994	434	423	477	479	49.6	42
1993	438	434	477	478	48.9	43
1992	433	423	475	476	47.5	42
1991	439	422	481	474	45.4	42

* 1996 figures are based on different criteria than previous years and should not be compared to previous years' scores.

■ American College Test (ACT)

1996 ended the long-term trend for increasingly higher percentages of Alaska graduating seniors taking the ACT. A little over one-third of the state's seniors took the test compared to 42% in 1995. The ACT assesses student knowledge and skills in four areas: English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science Reasoning. ACT reports individual scores in each area, along with a composite score. The figure below, presents the scores achieved by Alaska seniors in each content area compared with seniors nationwide.

A COMPARISON OF 1996 ALASKA AND NATIONAL ACT SCORES BY ACADEMIC AREA



Alaska seniors taking the ACT in 1996 achieved at or above the national averages in the three of the four areas assessed: Math, Reading, and Science Reasoning. In English, Alaska students achieved slightly below the average score for seniors nationally. The Alaska composite score, which is a weighted average of the four content scores, was the same as that achieved by seniors nationally.

Data from the ACT report continues to reflect the high positive relationship that exists between taking a challenging high school curriculum and high ACT scores. For example, the Alaska seniors who reported taking a "Core Program," composed of four or more years of English and three or more years of Mathematics, Social Studies and Natural Sciences, achieved a average composite score of 24.1. This score is significantly higher than the composite score of 20.6 achieved by the seniors taking the ACT who did not report taking a Core Program.

Alaska students' test results also reflect a linear relationship between high ACT scores and higher levels of reported family income, as can be seen from these examples:

Students reporting an annual family income of:	Achieved an average ACT Composite score of:
less than \$18,000	16.2
\$18,000 - \$36,000	19.9
more than \$36,000	22.8

Advanced Placement (AP) Examinations

Each year in May, The College Board administers Advanced Placement Examinations in a number of core subjects⁴. High school students who take and pass these exams can receive college credit, or advanced college placement. Last year, more than a half-million students nationally took at least one AP exam. The College Board reported that 1,496 Alaska high school students took AP Examinations in one or more subjects—a 50% increase in the number of students over last year's numbers. Of the Alaska students, 237 were minority students, an increase of about one-fifth over last year. In Alaska, 63.8% of exam takers received a grade of 3 or higher, slightly higher than the national average of 63.5%. About 3% more Alaska students received a grade of "3" in 1996 than in 1995. A score of 3 or higher is reported by The College Board to be the equivalent of A's, B's and high C's in college.

High School Completion

Alaska school districts establish local high school graduation requirements that meet or exceed State regulatory standards. Students are awarded secondary credit on the basis of a passing grade for a course of study prescribed by the local school board. In

⁴ English, Languages, Math/Computer Science, Science, Social Science/History Art and Music

the case of special education students precluded from taking regular course offerings, alternative completion requirements may be established, in the form of substitute course offerings or certificate of attendance so designated on the transcript.

Before graduation, Alaska students must have earned at least 21 units of credit and completed at least the following;

- (1) language arts - 4 units of credit
- (2) social studies - 3 units of credit
- (3) mathematics - 2 units of credit
- (4) science - 2 units of credit
- (5) health/physical education -1 unit of credit
- (6) remaining required credits as specified by the local school board. Many districts require more than the state minimum.

High school diplomas were awarded to 6,018 seniors in 1996.

■ Alternative Diploma/ Certificate

Adult Basic Education (ABE) and Literacy is a basic skills education program for adults sixteen and older who are not enrolled in school and do not have a high school diploma. Seventeen local and regional ABE programs, four Literacy Volunteer programs, the Corrections ABE and the Alaska Housing Program offer services in 16 communities across the state. Course offerings include English as a second language, reading and literature, writing, mathematics, science, social studies, computer literacy, job seeking, citizenship and life skills. All ABE centers offer testing for the General Educational Development (GED) diploma-by-examination.

During the 1996 calendar year, 2,111 adults (sixteen and older) were awarded a GED diploma-by-examination. Fifty-five percent (1,164) of the recipients were under the age of 21.

An additional 463 achieved a high school equivalency diploma as a result of participating in an ABE program.

TABLE 4
1995-96 GRADUATES BY ETHNICITY
Percentage of 12th grade Enrollment represents the total 12th grade enrollment by ethnicity divided by October 1 enrollment in 12th grade.

Ethnicity	% of 12th Grade Enrollment	1996 Graduates
White	68.5%	70%
Black	4.3%	3.7%
Hispanic	3%	2.5%
Asian	5.2%	4.8%
Alaska Native/ American Indian	19.1%	18.9%

Quality Professional Workforce

This area of the Initiative focuses on standards for preparation, licensing and continuing development, and evaluation of teachers and administrators as well as strategies to increase the number of in-state, local, and Alaska Native hires.

Standards

Alaskan educators are the first in the nation to have statewide performance standards for teachers and administrators which will be the basis of preparation, licensure, evaluation, and continuing professional development. Standards require that classroom teachers know and apply these things to their practice:

- philosophy of education
- learning theory
- multiculturalism
- instruction and assessment
- learning environment
- family and community involvement
- professional growth.

Administrators must:

- provide leadership to the educational organization
- oversee implementation of curriculum
- coordinate student services
- use assessment information in making decisions
- communicate well with diverse individuals and groups
- understand social, cultural, economic, and political influences
- facilitate participation by parents and families.

Preparation

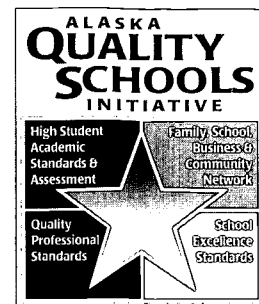
The Department of Education is working with the university teacher preparation programs in Alaska to ensure that Alaska graduates will meet the professional standards at the entry level, at least.

Licensure and Continuing Development

With the assistance of the broadly representative Professional Licensure Task Force, the Department is fashioning a three-tiered licensure system that will require that professional educators have the knowledge and skills to help students meet standards. After demonstrating entry level skill to receive an initial level license, educators new to Alaska's schools will spend about a year of induction and demonstrate a higher level of meeting professional standards before receiving a standard level license. Educators may choose to demonstrate an even higher level of mastery of the standards as their careers progress.

Alaska Hire

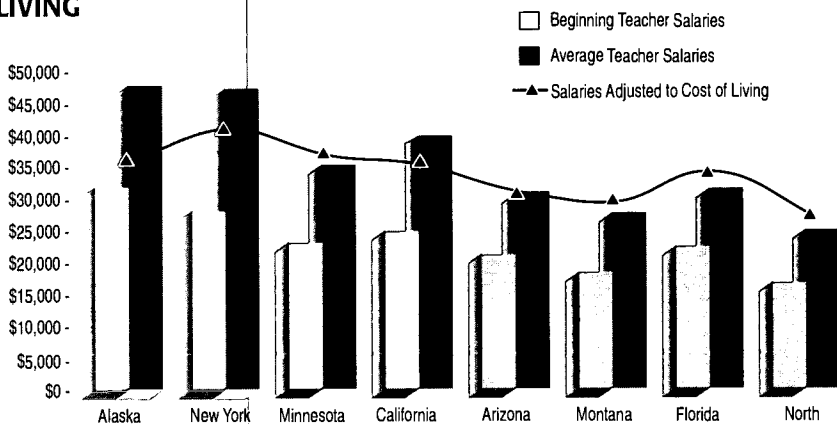
Alaska now imports up to 85% of its new educators from outside of the state. By tailoring our five in-state teacher preparation programs to help educators meet Alaska's standards, we can help our local workforce be the best prepared for hire in Alaskan schools. Further, the Rural Educator Preparation Program, a partnership between the University of Alaska and consortia of rural districts, is working to prepare and place educators in their home communities.



Salaries

Although Alaska's salaries have only increased 7.23% since 1991 while the U.S. average rose 8.3%, Alaska's average salaries are still 130% of the U.S. average. Ranking second in the nation, Alaska's salaries give its educators one of the highest compensation rates in the nation. According to statistics compiled by the American Federation of Teachers, even after adjustment to the cost-of-living index, Alaska's salaries still rank among the top 14 in the U.S. While average top salaries for principals and administrators rose marginally, the average salary for chief administrators dropped by 3% (due mainly to a high turnover of long-term superintendents).

BEGINNING/ AVERAGE TEACHER SALARIES ADJUSTED TO THE COST OF LIVING



Statewide Educator Supply/Demand Report, Alaska Teacher Placement, University of AK Fairbanks, Dec. 1996

Supply/Demand

Information concerning supply and demand by endorsement areas follows in Table 5. The supply is the ATP registrant pool, and the demand is the total number of new openings (both rural and urban) for 1996. As is apparent from this table, if a candidate was endorsed in the high demand/low supply area, with strong qualifications and references, and was willing to relocate to any location in Alaska, the chance of acquiring a position was very strong. For example, with only 540 elementary teachers registered for 133 rurally-located elementary positions, odds (1 in 4.1) of ob-

taining a position are high. If the candidate is endorsed in a high supply/low demand area (such as social studies), placement becomes more difficult. Teachers with expertise in more than one area are much more employable in rural Alaska than those singularly endorsed.

TABLE 5

Endorsement Areas	#ATP Registrants	Filled Positions		1996's Total Statewide Positions
		Rural	Urban	
Administration	139	83	8	684
Central Office		13.6	4	161
Art	23	2.5	6	79
Bilingual/Bicultural	4	0	5	40
Business Education	19	1.5	2.8	59
Computer Science	10	4.2	3	40
Counselor	74	21	2	225
Early Childhood	32	16.5	0	53
Elementary (K-6)	540	135	75	2119
English	167	34.9	24	230
Foreign Language	21	6.6	7.5	72
Generalist		25.8	0	1200
Gifted/Talented	3	2.5	7	84
Health	21	1.5	3.5	30
Home Economics	9	2	3	40
Industrial Arts	39	11	8.5	140
Library	13	6	10	150
Mathematics	77	23.7	23.1	200
Middle School (7-8)	9	17.5	17	127
Music	18	4.9	13.2	163
OT/PT		2	1	42
Physical Ed	55	3.1	13	215
Reading	29	8	5	46
School Psych.	21	4	5	74
Science	148	22.7	19.5	183
Social Studies	186	11	15.5	191
Special Education	211	63	68.3	709
SPED/ECE		0.5	22	
Speech Path.	8	6	15	143
Long Term Sub.	150	5	5	
Other		10.5	30.5	70
TOTAL		549.5	422.4	7408

TABLE 6
ALASKA HIRES IN 1996

Information	Total Number	Percentage of 1996 New Hires (972)
Alaska Residents	697	60%
Local Residents	462	48%
1st Year Teachers	249	26%
Teaching Couples	55	6%
Protected Class	66	7%
Alaska Natives	36	4%

Statewide Educator Supply/Demand Report, Alaska Teacher Placement, University of AK Fairbanks, Dec. 1996

Family, School, Business and Community Network

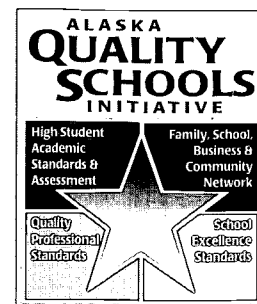
Alaska is the only state in the nation to include family involvement as part of its state school improvement platform. *The Alaska Quality Schools Initiative* encourages collaborations between and among the various organizations and agencies involved in student learning. Information and training assists districts to engage in proven involvement models, such as Partnership 2000, a national initiative to provide opportunities for parent and family support of student learning. Six districts are currently involved in a pilot program of Partnership 2000.

Research has shown for decades that when parents and families are involved in student learning, students achieve at a higher level. *To the extent that parents report satisfaction with various school practices, their involvement tends to increase.* The Report Card provided an opportunity for all 53 districts to assess how well schools are supporting six areas of parent involvement, rating a variety of school practices as “never”, “seldom”, “sometimes” or “often” used in their school to foster:

- improving parents’ understanding of parenting and child development
- communicating with parents and keeping them informed about their child’s progress and school programs
- encouraging parent volunteering at the school and participation in school activities
- helping families assist children to learn at home

- engaging parents as advisors, decision-makers and advocates
- supporting families by collaborating with the community to bring to families needed resources and increase family participation in the community.

In the area of parent responsibility, most districts provided workshops and written materials. Three districts reported home visits as a strategy used “often.” Sixty-percent of the districts reported that teacher-initiated calls, letters and conferences were employed frequently. Student performances, athletic and award events were frequent, but few districts reported having mentoring programs. The majority of districts indicated support of home-learning activities as something they “often” do.



School Excellence

During the past year, the Department of Education has engaged educational agencies and a broad-based committee of Alaskans in the development of standards for successful schools. Standards are based on known characteristics of successful, high-quality schools—where students achieve, staff have the preparation they need to help children learn, and parents and community are involved in meaningful ways.

These key characteristics of schooling, when viewed together, say much more about what goes on in school than when indicators are considered independently. The following indicators can be useful to the process of school improvement.

TABLE 7
Summary of Schools Accredited by Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges December, 1995

Elementary	10
Middle	11
High School	40
K-12	110
Special Purpose Schools	6
(Alternative Schools)	
Accredited Public Schools	177
Private Schools	7
Total Accredited in Alaska	184



School Accreditation

The decision to seek accreditation is a local school board option. Alaska is only one of two western states without a state accreditation process. Since the 1970's, the State Board of Education has delegated accreditation to the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges (NWASC). Accreditation by NWASC is a two-step process for school improvement, consisting of an annual report which details continuous growth, and a full-scale self-evaluation of the total education program every ten years.

Voluntary school accreditation has resulted in only one-third of Alaska's schools seeking accreditation status. The majority of accredited schools serve a K-12 grade span. Generally, Rural Education Attendance Areas (REAA's) have a greater percentage of accredited schools.

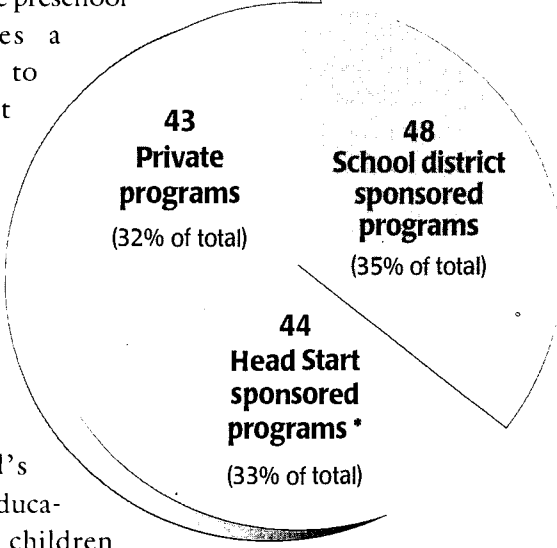
Certification of Preschool Education Programs

Research from the Economic and Social Research Institute (June, 1995) indicates that quality preschool education represents one proven way to prepare young children for elementary school. The preschool experience increases a preschooler's ability to learn and to interact positively with other children. This and other research confirms that preschool education experience has positive short- and long-term results.

When the school's primary function is educational, programs for children ages three through five years must be

TOTAL NUMBER OF PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS CERTIFIED BY THE DEPARTMENT

**Five Head Start programs are sponsored in cooperation with a school district.*

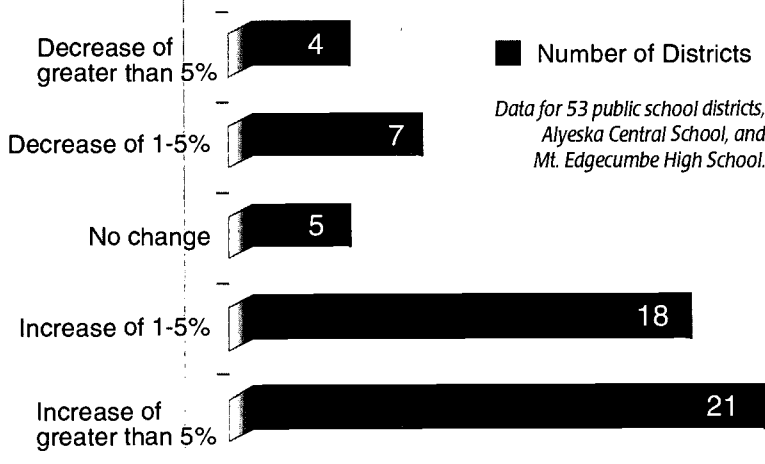


certified by the Department of Education. Statutory requirements for certification focus primarily on reducing predictable risk to the health and safety of young children. Once these measures are in place, the children are free to experience their learning environment. The Department encourages certified programs to incorporate developmentally-appropriate practices that foster each stage of cognitive, social, emotional and physical development of young children.

Annual Change in Membership

Alaska's student population continues to rise. The average daily membership for 1995-96 represents a 1.8% increase over the previous year. Sixteen districts experienced no change or a decrease in this period, Pelican and Southeast Island losing the most students, at 15.6% and 8% respectively. The two fastest growing districts were St. Mary's and the Aleutian Region.

ANNUAL CHANGE IN MEMBERSHIP From FY95 to FY96

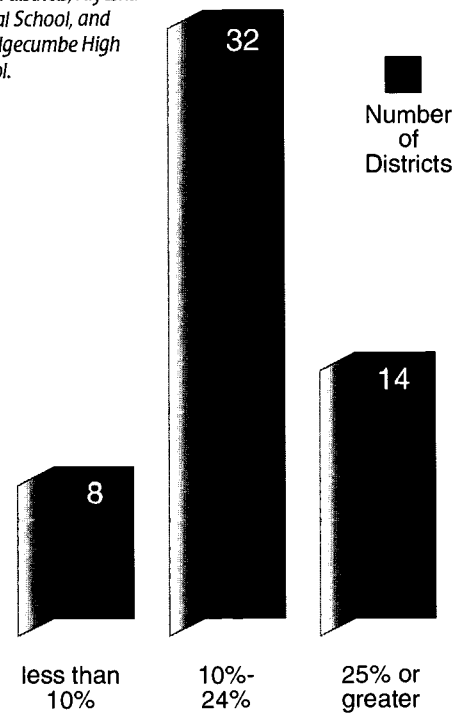


Transiency Rate

The percentage of enrollment change due to student transfers into and out of the district during the school year (transiency) is an important consideration in judging a school's long-term performance. Student mobility impacts both urban and rural schools. Southeast and coastal districts report the highest annual transiency rates, ranging up to 48%.

TRANSCIENCY RATE

Data for 52 public school districts, Alyeska Central School, and Mt. Edgcombe High School.



Attendance Rate


The amount of time students are present at school and actively engaged in learning relates directly to academic performance. Because sufficient, perhaps additional, instructional time is required for low-achieving students to make achievement gains, successful schools emphasize consistent attendance.

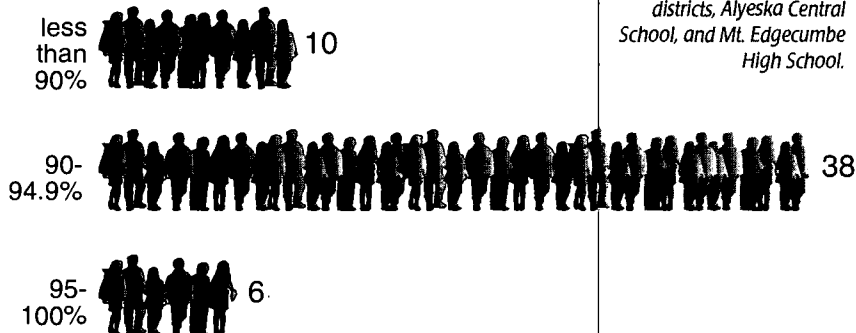
The number of schools having less than 90% attendance rate increased from eight districts in 1994-95, to ten districts in 1995-96.

9th Grade Cohort Graduation Rate

An important indicator of school performance is the proportion of students completing their high school education. A secondary diploma is thought to be a minimum preparation for entry in a modern job market.

Cohort graduation rates reflect the proportion of students in the 9th grade class of four years ago who are awarded a high school diploma four years later, taking into account deaths and transfers. The statewide cohort graduation rate for the 1995-96 school year is 81.2%, a slight increase over last year. However, the statewide and district cohort graduation rates should be viewed with caution. Problems of definition discovered last year will continue to be addressed until valid, reliable data can be reported and used comparatively. Nine districts, each having K-12 enrollments of less than 400, reported a 100% graduation rate.

 Number of Districts



ATTENDANCE RATE

Data for 52 public school districts, Alyeska Central School, and Mt. Edgecumbe High School.

Annual Dropout Rate for Grades 7-12

Dropout event rates answer the question, "What percentage of students in grades seven through twelve dropped out this year?". Students transferring to another school or alternative program that meets standard credit requirements are not considered dropouts.

Of 53,633 students enrolled in grades seven through twelve, 4.1% (2,189) dropped out during the 1995-96 school term, similar to the previous year. As with graduation rates, the rate of students dropping out may be an indication of how well the educational program is meeting and adapting to students' needs.

**TABLE 8
DROPOUTS BY ETHNICITY**

Ethnicity	Grades 7-12 Percentage of Total Enrollment	Grades 7-12 Percentage of Total Dropouts
White	66.9	58.5
Black	4.5	3.8
Hispanic	2.6	4.7
Asian	4.5	3.5
Alaska Native/ American Indian	21.6	29.5

Environmental Education

As 14.30.120 encourages districts to initiate and conduct a program of environmental education for kindergarten through grade 12. District report cards include an evaluation of environmental education curriculum. This year's reports yielded the following information:

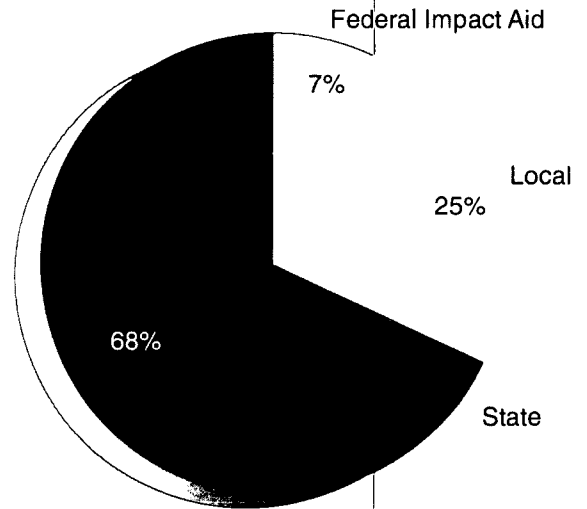
- eight districts consider their curriculum comprehensive, typically integrated into science or other curricula
- thirteen districts indicate the curriculum is board-adopted
- thirty-four provide courses of study that emphasize environmental education or natural resource conservation
- the majority of districts have environmental education at all grade levels



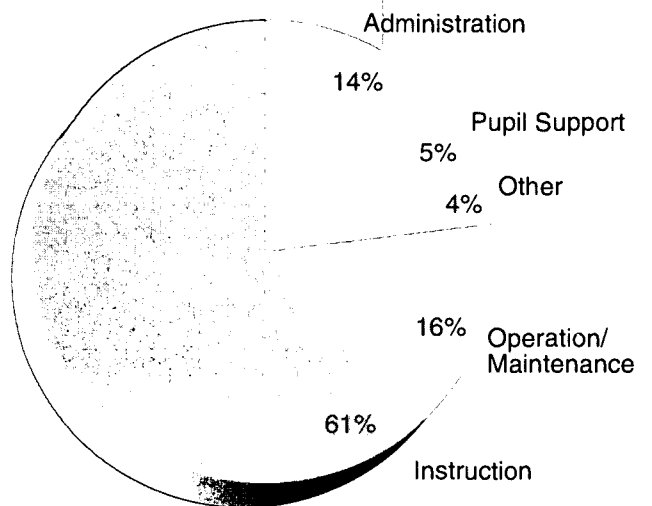
Education Resources

The pie charts/figure below illustrate total education revenues and expenditures for 1995-96, as reported by school districts' annual financial statements. Although statewide education revenues rose nearly eight percent from 1992 to 1996, expenditures increased by more than ten percent. The 1995-96 expenditures outdistance revenues for that year by 1.7%, an indication that school districts are spending down financial reserves.

TOTAL FY96 REVENUES BY SOURCE
Does not reflect federal categorical program revenues.



TOTAL 1995-96 AUDITED EXPENDITURES
Does not reflect federal categorical program revenues.



Sources of Data for This Report

Adult Basic Education Program Participation and Performance Report (1995-96)

Alaska State Assessment of Student Performance in Grades 4, 8, 11 (Fall, 1995/Spring, 1996)

- California Achievement Test
- Building Questionnaire
- Student Questionnaire

Alaska School Accreditation Status Report,
Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges (1995-96)

Certified Staff Accounting Report (October 1, 1995)

Classified Staff Accounting Report (October 1, 1995)

Foundation Report for Funding Communities (October, 1996)

Federal Migrant Education Program Participation and Performance Report (1995-96)

Federal Title I Program Participation and Performance Report (1995-96)

Report of School-Age Children Receiving Public Assistance (HSS, January, 1996)

Report of Alaska Preschool Certification (1995-96)

School District Report Card(s) to the Public (1995-96)

- Progress Toward District Goals
- Comments on School Performance by Students, Parents, Community
- Parent Involvement Strategies Questionnaire
- Other Indicators of Performance
- Summary and Evaluation of Environmental Education
- Average Daily Membership/Percent Change in Membership
- Student Transfers Into and Out of the District/Transiency Rate
- District and School Aggregate Attendance/Rate
- District and School Dropout Worksheet/Dropout Rate for 9th Grade Cohort
- High School Completion/District Graduation Rate
- Students Promoted to the Next Grade/District Promotion Rate for Grades 1-8

District Education Plan - Goals, Assessment and Participation

School Districts' Annual Audited Financial Statement (October, 1996)

Student Enrollment, Ethnicity and Summer Graduate Report (October 1, 1995)

Year-End Graduate Report (June, 1996)

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