

# **Alaska's History of Home School Charter & Statewide Correspondence**

Highlights from ...

*Home Schooling in Alaska* by Terje Hanson

**1899** - During the Gold Rush era, the Federal Bureau of Education was responsible for educating Alaska's children. They were unable to keep up with the growth of communities. The Douglas Island News recommended home education and exhorted parents to read to their children. p11-12

**1905** - Federal Bureau of Education assumed control of education of all Natives while the incorporated towns, comprised mostly of white people, supported their own schools. In 1905, the Nelson Act created the Alaska Fund (from license fees outside of incorporated towns). The Nelson Act allotted 25% of this fund for education and the establishment of a school district and school board. p 13

**1917** - Ex-officio Territorial Board of Education (comprised of Governor Strong and four senators) was appointed by the Territorial legislature. p 14

**1933** - Eleventh AK Legislature created the Board of Education, removed the public school system from the Territorial Board of Education & delegated \$8000 for use of newly created Division of High School Correspondence

**1933-1934** - Extreme changes in education funding: Funding cuts for transportation funds for children in outlying areas (It was thought this would encourage residents in rural areas and non-incorporated districts to incorporate and levy taxes • Abolishment of rural school boards • Elimination of funds for rural high schools.

**1936** - Territorial Board requests \$4000 for correspondence ed. (for those in "isolated" places). Legislature did not adopt this recommendation.

**1939** – The Territorial Board recommended that the Legislature provide \$8000 for the education of students in isolated areas. The legislature denied the \$8000 but directed the Commissioner to use funding from the Schools Outside Incorporated Cities Fund. The Territory ordered 11 Calvert Correspondence School Courses saving the State \$933/student (Calvert cost \$520/student vs. rural school cost \$1453.44/student) p21-22

**1941** - Territorial Board decides remote students should be offered the option of high school correspondence.

**1955** - Ak Dept of Education begins developing courses and providing correspondence grading services for high schools

**1959** - Statehood

**1969** - Alaska Dept of Education hires Alaska certificated teachers to develop and grade courses

**1970 (to 1976)** - Students enrolled in state correspondence study

**1971** - Five Kivalina Native families file suit wanting to receive secondary education in Kivalina.

**1972** - Suit (similar to Kivalina) - Twenty-eight rural Native students file suit (Hootch vs. State Operated School System (4 years court time).

**1973** - Improvements in 10 yr old curriculum—Board of Education cites that “quality of education received [in correspondence study] should be as nearly as possible on par with the levels of students attending public school.” p42

**1974** - SB35 set up Regional Education Attendance Areas decentralizing education across the state. Dept of Education sought to decentralize correspondence education.

**1975** – State Board of Education (March minutes) determines it was the Dept. of Education's duty to give responsibility and funding to the districts for teaching students. The services that can not be provided will be taken care of by departments. The Department should not be in the business of directly operating programs for school districts. (Correcting papers, giving grades) The Department should be more concerned with providing leadership and training to the districts.

**1975**- SB 367/ HB 443 – Correspondence Study through district or state – Homeschoolers had a choice (no two mile limit) Correspondence for everyone.

**1975-77** - CCS helped many Districts with Correspondence Study – contracting with some.

**1977** – (Sept) CCS (Central Correspondence Study) hosted 1<sup>st</sup> annual Correspondence Conference

**1983** - “private exempt school” only requirement is to provide attendance records 1/yr, meet immunization requirements and administer tests gr, 4, 6, 8

**1984** - 26 of 53 school districts operated correspondence study programs

**1985** - Interwest Applied Research of Portland Oregon points out contradiction between In-district School Board AS 14.14.090 (2) and State Dept. of Ed. AS14.070.020(9) statutes as related to correspondence students.

**1993** - CCS becomes Alyeska Correspondence

**1994** - Cordova School District asked Chugach School District to serve correspondence students outside of Cordova city limits.

**1995** - There are 995 students homeschooling under private exempt status

**1995** – Charter school pilot program

**1996** – SCR 25 (Senator Mike Miller) extols benefits of a viable home school community and encourages “cooperation with parents who are teaching their children at home.” Oct 13-19, 1996 is Alaska Home Education Week

**1996** – Chugach School District offers cross district program serving 12 students in Anchorage.

**1997** – SB 134 (Loren Leman) passes both houses – complete deregulation of homeschooling in Alaska. (Independent homeschoolers)

**1997 – 1999** - Birth of other statewide correspondence programs - so many that Dept of Ed caps # of programs possible.

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Terje’s history ends with the year 2000

**2001-2008** – The Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development, the Department of Education and Early Development, the Legislature, Administrators of Homeschool programs and homeschoolers have survived a period of growth with many birthing pains. Homeschoolers are very fortunate that the Legislative body has always listened and supported us. In 2002, Legislature supported homeschoolers’ rights to use privately owned materials SB345 signed into law: AS 14.07.050. In 2004, homeschoolers, independent and affiliated with homeschool programs, joined together to form the Alaska Home Educators Alliance: AHEA. In November several of our members were honored to be invited and attended the Alaska Education Summit.