



How Bad Does YOUR Alaska School Have To Get?

Description

Kenai Parents are Taking Back a Failing School

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Russian Old Believers Church in Nikolaevsk

A landmark in the Kenai Peninsula Community of Nikolaevsk, this church and the local school were built by the people here. Today they have had enough of deaf ears and lip service; they will be ignored no longer.

Members of the community of Nikolaevsk met Friday, September 23, 2022 and formally voted to start a *Charter School*

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Video of Kenai Parents vote to take back Nikolaevsk school

Next will likely be war with the **Kenai Peninsula Borough School District (KPBSD)** bureaucracy responsible for systemic degradation of the once vibrant school.

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Deacon **Vasily Yakunin** and his wife **Efrosinia** say they are 110% behind taking the school back with a new charter school run by parents. (Efrosinia is pregnant with the extra 10%)

KPBSD Board of Education Charter School Oversight Committee will be meeting September 27, 2022 at the school district headquarters to consider the **Initial Homer Forest Charter School Application**. ((Meeting Sep 27, 2022 – Board of Education Charter School Oversight Committee Meeting <https://go.boarddocs.com/ak/kpbsd/Board.nsf/public>))

This Date is too early for Nikolaevsk School parents to present their proposal to do the same thing, but they are working on it and hope to have it by Fall 2023, if the school program doesn't collapse completely by then. ((Homer Forest Charter School Application

[https://go.boarddocs.com/ak/kpbsd/Board.nsf/files/CJFMMT5ACD99/\\$file/Initial%20Charter%20School%20Application.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/ak/kpbsd/Board.nsf/files/CJFMMT5ACD99/$file/Initial%20Charter%20School%20Application.pdf)))



Mariah Kerrone

Parent leader **Mariah Kerrone**: *We aren't taking the school over, we're taking it back. It will be run by parents.*

[Who Cares about YOUR Kid's Education?](#)

Attentive Listening Time, Gov. Mike Dunleavy.

This is a unique cultural area of Alaska. People here cherish their northern latitude multi-cultural heritage.

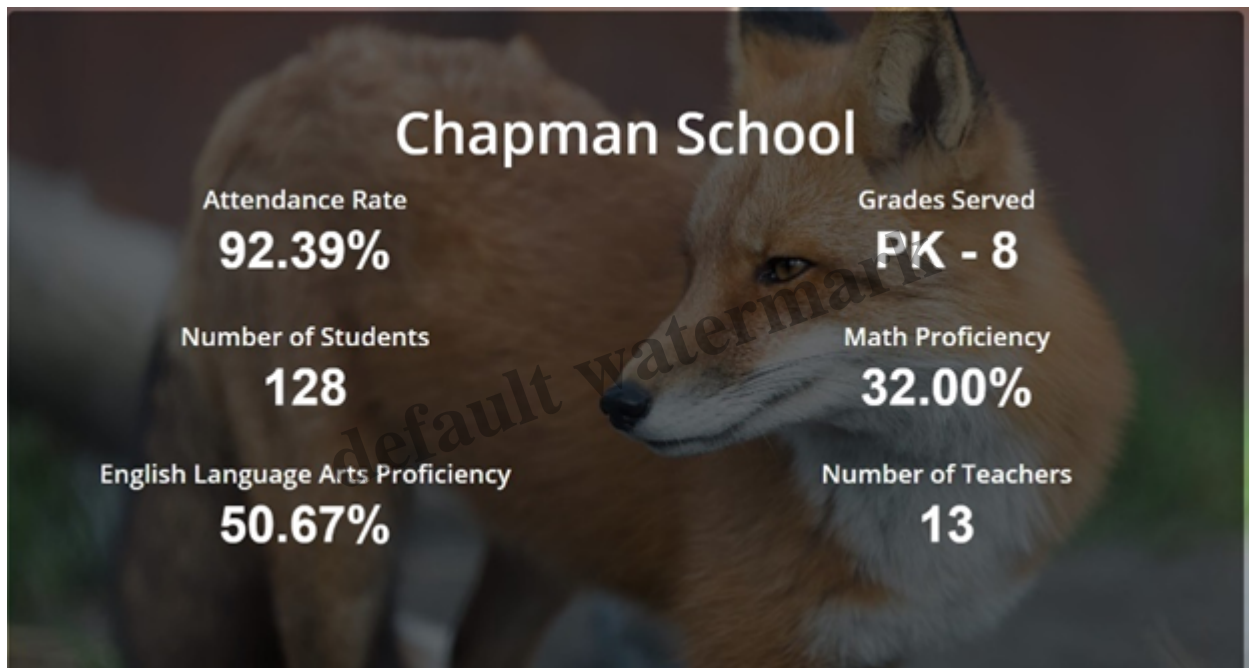
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Rep. **Sarah Vance** (Representative.Sarah.Vance@akleg.gov) witnessed the unanimous vote to form a Charter School.

*My family resides in the Nikolaevsk (K-12) School boundary but I have to try to get busing for my son because he is in 10th grade in Anchor Point, explained Kerrone. I pulled my other three kids out of the district and enrolled them with **Interior Distance Education of Alaska (IDEA)** because I've had enough dealing with KPBSD. My son really needs the regimented schedule of school, so for him I don't have a choice, but Chapman's a great school. It's overcrowded right now, because all the kids from Nikolaevsk have either shifted to homeschool or to Chapman.*

KPBSD is having to add relocatable classrooms at Chapman. ((Interior Distance Education of Alaska [About Interior Distance Education of Alaska | IDEA Homeschool \(ideafamilies.org\)](#)))



Overview

Support Designation

[View designation report](#)

School Spending Per Pupil: **\$22,018.00**

[More Info](#)

District

Kenai Peninsula Borough School District

Principal

Eric Hart

School Type

Traditional public school

School Board President

Zen Kelly

What is this school's poverty level?

Mid-Poverty

How has enrollment changed since last year?

+0.00%

Nikolaevsk School was built and started for the **Old Believer Russian Orthodox Community** with the intent of respecting their holy days and traditions. Kids who couldn't attend government school on their holy days fell behind in learning, according to Kerrone. This school respects subsistence schedules and lifestyles of this area. The lots for the school were donated by a group of community members who had originally purchased them together in a 1 square mile block from the state. Construction materials were donated from an oil company and flown in.

The people of this Alaskan jewel of a community understandably feel a sense of ownership for this school THEY BUILT. Some feel KPBSD has consciously sabotaged the Nikolaevsk School with the intent to shutter it's doors. Few kids are left.

[Our ASD Public Education Challenge: Parents in Eagle River/Chugiak Deserve Local Control](#)

Attentive Listening Time, Gov. Mike Dunleavy.

*Last winter the **KPBSD Board** came out to learn about the school, with one member saying they didn't even know the school was out here, but "we're here to find out what's going on at the school," said Kerrone They had a meeting where the parents all came to the gym at Nikolaevsk and it was emotional. This vibrant school was once the heartbeat of the community. Parents have witnessed student counts in the 80s sink to now in the 20s. At the on-site meeting board members said, "We heard this is a dying community."*

But there are more kids in this community today than there have been in the last 10 years! exclaimed Kerrone. Families are moving into this area. We told them the way that the school is being run isn't serving our community well. We need a school that's fits our community. We don't live all the way out here so that we can drive into town—we don't want to be in town. We want our kids to have a subsistence lifestyle. One other parent's kids have to ride ATVs to get to school because they live so far out on the trail, they can't even get there by car.

[Job Considerations to Stay in Alaska](#)

Attentive Listening Time, Gov. Mike Dunleavy.

Overcoming Inertia

*I got on the **Site Counsel** after the first year of pushing for things to get done, explained Kerrone. If I suggested something people glared at me and tried to shut me down. At the meetings they had the same goals every time and nobody did anything. It was like we just met to fulfill the duty of meeting. The second year on Site Council, they tried to tell me I wasn't on it anymore—even though I had been elected for two years. Next, they quit telling me when the meetings were. I was pushing for a light in the parking lot and they said "No." I was pushing to keep the longstanding school schedule. They wanted to shift to a regular school schedule, because they said: "There's not that many Russian Orthodox kids anymore." I said: The parents bringing their kids here LIKE the Russian-themed culture, we would like to see Russian taught! They said: "We can't afford that." I said, "Yes, we can! There are Russian speakers in the village."*

[Parents Have Rights!](#)

Attentive Listening Time, Gov. Mike Dunleavy.

There's one teacher and an aide now, continued Kerrone. There's a principal who really should be a full time principal just for Ninilchik because that school has more students. It's a 45-minute drive from Ninilchik to check us, and he's supposed to be the principal to both schools now. He's brand new, he's not at all the problem, but I think the teacher is overwhelmed. She works well with some kids but with others she butts heads.



Overview

Support Designation

[View designation report](#)

School Spending Per Pupil: \$30,112.00

[More Info](#)

District

Kenai Peninsula Borough School District

Principal

Matthew LaHue

School Type

Traditional public school

School Board President

Zen Kelly

What is this school's poverty level?

Mid-Poverty

How has enrollment changed since last year?

+0.00%

Managed to Fail?

When attendance gets down to single digits it becomes untenable, said Kerrone.



This is **false** AK DEED information. There is only one teacher and an aide at this PK-12 school.

Overview

Support Designation
[View designation report](#)

School Spending Per Pupil: **\$45,704.00** [More Info](#)

District Kenai Peninsula Borough School District	Principal Matthew LaHue
School Type Traditional public school	School Board President Zen Kelly
What is this school's poverty level? Mid-Poverty	How has <u>enrollment</u> changed since last year? +0.00%

The Kenai District is paying nearly \$46,000 per kid at this school. ((AK Department of Education information-Nikolaevsk School <https://education.alaska.gov/compass/ParentPortal/SchoolProfile?SchoolID=240130>))

[Alaska's Government School Failure: What will it take to fix them?](#)

Attentive Listening Time, Gov. Mike Dunleavy.

Catalyst for Change

*I began researching alternatives and the community has decided to form a Charter School. I met with the former principal of **Aurora Borealis Charter school, Larry Nauta** and the current principal, said Kerrone. I've talked with folks at **Academy Charter School** in Palmer and I have been gathering and researching how to bring our community back together because this is really hurting our community. We used to have basketball tournaments in the gym—where everybody cheered for the kids—we had a basketball program for kindergarten Little Tykes through 12th Grade. The school isn't offering anything with 23 kids, 15 of whom the parents have said they will join our charter school when we get it up.*



One example of a successful current rural charter school is at Hooper Bay in the **Lower Yukon School District**. Parents there also had to create a proposal and beg for the right to run their own school.

<https://lysd.org/hooper-bay-charter-school/>

According to information provided by the **Alaska Department of Education**:

Alaska established charter school legislation in 1995 in response to requests from parents and teachers for more educational choices for their students. Charter programs provide the opportunity to offer educational programs customized specifically to the community. Charter programs can offer new and often unique options for parental choice in the education of their children. ((AKDEED Information about Charter Schools https://education.alaska.gov/Alaskan_Schools/Charter))

<https://donnliston.net/2019/10/a-teachers-dilemma-2019-donnliston/>
Attentive Listening Time, Gov. Mike Dunleavy.

As a matter of fact, this writer worked as Juneau staff for **NEA-Alaska** in 1995 and participated in the attempt to make sure charter schools required teachers to be Alaska Certified and members of the teacher union if the legislature insisted on creating this new kind of public school in law. Argument against charter schools was: “resources taken from the education budget would mean less resources for disadvantaged students” in our government Education Factories. Today School District Collective Bargaining Agreements across the state cannot legally require teachers to be members of the union as a result of **US Supreme Court** rulings, but bully peer pressure and a **AK Department of Education** beholden to **NEA-Alaska**, means instead of requiring teachers to opt-into the union, they are urged to be members and must jump through hoops to get out. ((Alaska Charter School FAQ <https://education.alaska.gov/FAQ/CharterSchools/All>))

[What Parents Can Do](#)

Attentive Listening Time, Gov. Mike Dunleavy.

Public Education is one of the largest expenditures in the state budget but we remain at the bottom of the states in academic outcomes. ((List of Current Charter Schools https://education.alaska.gov/Alaskan_Schools/charter/docs/charter-school-directory-2020.pdf))

Parent Work to form Nikolaevsk Charter School is Underway

Curriculum must meet state standards.

*I'm in charge of the **Academic Policy Committee** and we've got five other moms involved—parents of children living in our area who also want the school to change, continued Kerrone. We're planning to offer core academic classes in morning sessions—language arts, math, science and history. Then we will offer a Home-Ec class where the kids will cook their own lunch at the school with wholesome foods. Afternoons will include extracurricular activities; music, Russian and PE. We already have skis and archery equipment at the school that we'd like to use. We want to do intensives—like they do at **Academy Charter School**—where the kids spend a week doing something memorable. At Academy they had the **Beaver Intensive**. Students spent a week setting traps up in Hatcher Pass, then they skinned and tanned the hides. My brother attended there and ended up with mittens out of his beaver that will serve him a lifetime.*

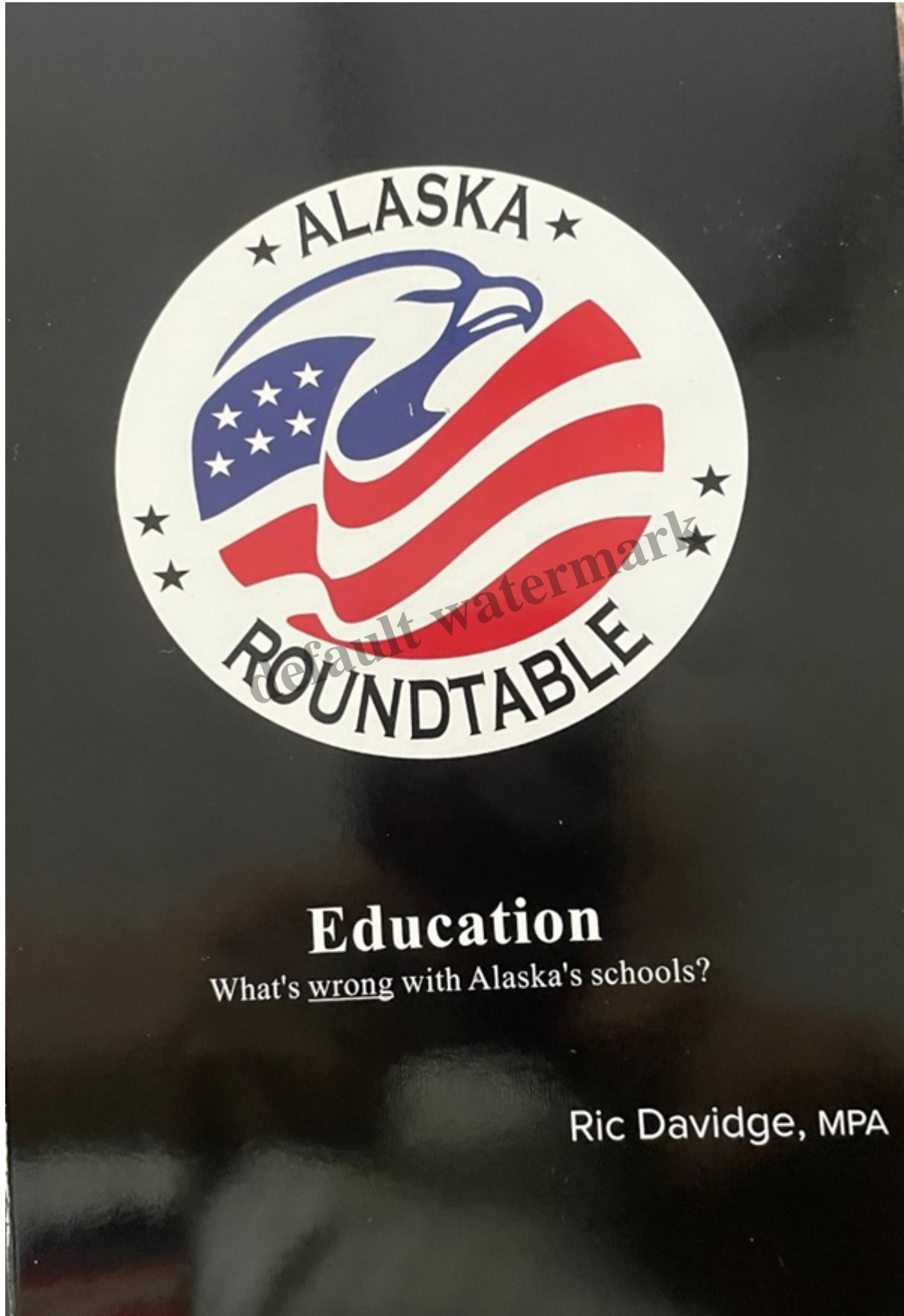
[WICHE Report: Swim little fish!](#)

Attentive Listening Time, Gov. Mike Dunleavy.

Gov. Michael Dunleavy is a former teacher-turned-educrat/politician who could help this effort. He could cut the red tape and let these rural Alaskans do themselves what the **State of Alaska** and **KPBS** continue to fail so miserably at.

But what are the chances of that, Big Guy?

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Category

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