

**My Dad forced Integration of this
White School in Yakutat Upon
Passage of the *Civil Rights Act of
1964***



8th Grade at Yakutat, AK

Description

Life Lessons about Alaska Public Education



This writer's longest time away from Alaska over 60 years living there was when I went to Tonasket, Washington to attend some high school. This was necessary because Yakutat had two K-8 schools but no high school. I attended three Tonasket HS semesters—coming home between each—before our family moved back to Anchorage. Dad was stationed at this northernmost community of Southeast Alaska as a civilian contractor. Ocean Cape was one site where employees could have families living in the vicinity—he was able to bid on this workstation.

Sister Vanessa, brother Scott and I began attending the **Yakutat FAA School** in September of 1964. This was the worst school year of my life, and I responded accordingly to the chaos as a belligerent youth. I was angry and disruptive. My teacher back in 6th grade, Mr. Waldrop at **Denali Elementary School** in Anchorage, had requested and been given written permission to issue corporal punishment to me.

7th Grade spent at Orah Dee Clark Junior High, in East Anchorage, with a mostly absentee father working at sites around the state, set the stage.



The Long View of Alaska Government Schools

Today anybody with an Education from Alaska public schools is at great disadvantage if they want to live anyplace but here. Our specialized economy traditionally imports people with special training and skills for top paying Alaska jobs; the rest work for the State of Alaska, in a unionized trade, or scratch out a living in the service sector. I have overcome the disadvantage of having an Alaska Public Education mostly with independent endeavor—and bluster.

[1] Who Cares About YOUR Kid's Education? DONN LISTON, August 11, 2020

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15 Hinugusan School

Postcard from Philippines

January 8, 2023 Tablas Island, Republic of Philippines—
Hinugusan Elementary School is where Sarah Jane Molo
is now principal. I just took this photo from the gate after
our interview earlier in the day.



Read that story here: <https://donnliston907.substack.com/p/edukasyon-sa-mga-lalawigan>

With a teacher corps of eight, the school serves 130 children. Primary language spoken is Tagalog but Principal Sarah is fluid in English and we spoke extensively about her 30+ year career as a teacher/administrator in San Angustin.

Free-range chickens enjoy the grassy schoolyard where the students hang out after classes are finished.

<https://donnliston907.substack.com/p/education-in-the-provinces>

No Child Left Behind

In September 1999, then-Governor of Texas George W. Bush gave a speech to the Latin Business Association about education. America needed to adopt the mindset that every child can learn, he said. “It does not matter if they grow up in foster care or a two-parent family. These circumstances are challenges, but they are not excuses.”

He continued:

Some say it is unfair to hold disadvantaged children to rigorous standards. I say it is discrimination to require anything less—the soft bigotry of low expectations. Some say that schools can’t be expected to teach, because there are too many broken families, too many immigrants, too much diversity. I say that pigment and poverty need not determine performance. That myth is disproved by good schools every day. Excuse-making must end before learning can begin.

The soft bigotry of low expectations—a powerful phrase crafted by Bush speechwriter Michael Gerson—describes a patronizing and dangerous attitude, cloaked as kindness, that assumes certain people are capable of less because of their race or background.

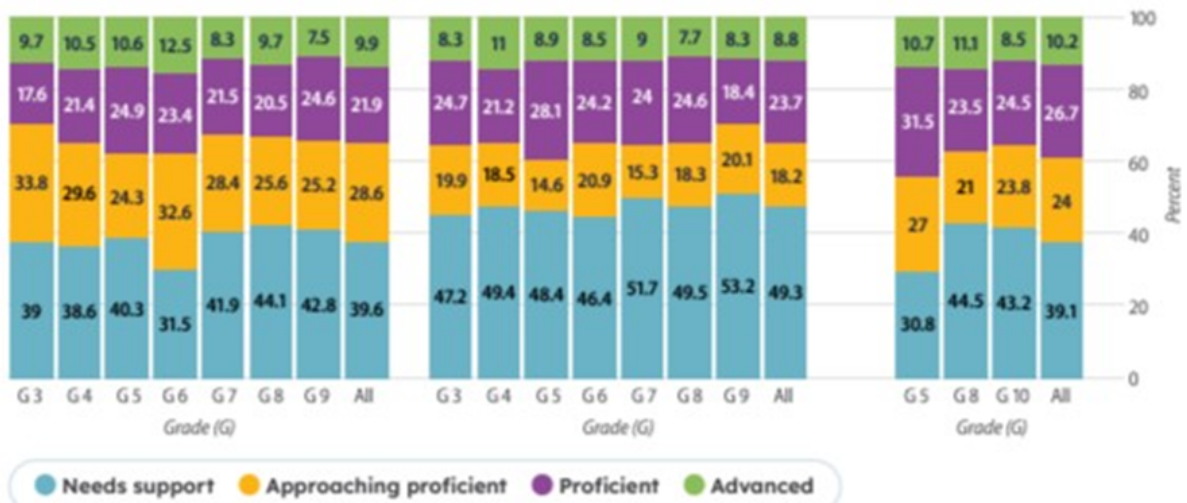
[2] What is the soft bigotry of low expectations? Pacific Legal Foundation, Nicole W.C. Yeatman, May 23, 2024

Summary of Statewide Performance

- ### English Language Arts
- 31.8% of Alaska students met grade-level expectations.
 - Students in grade 5 (35.5%) and grade 6 (35.9%) had the highest achievement levels.
 - Students in grade 8 (44.1%) demonstrated the greatest need for support.

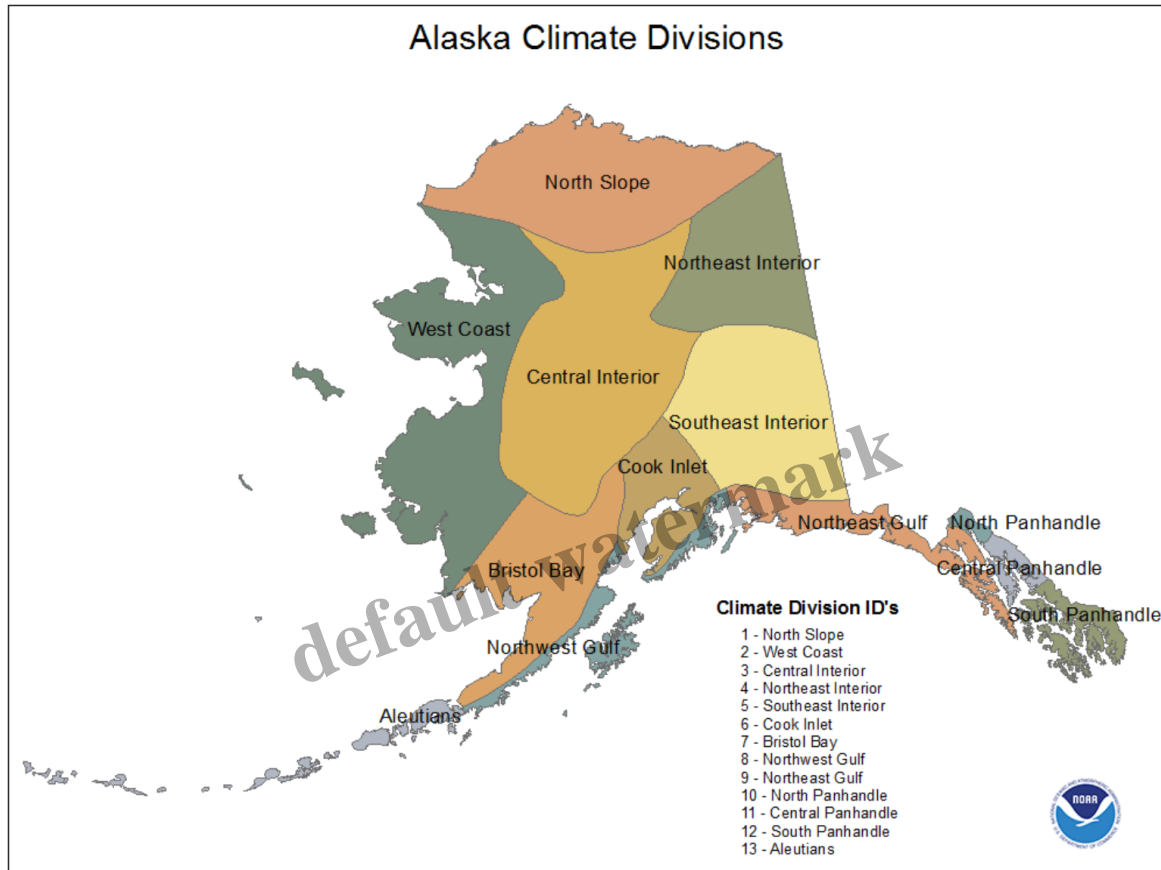
- ### Mathematics
- 32.5% of Alaska students met grade-level expectations.
 - Students in grade 5 (37%) had the highest achievement levels.
 - Students in grade 9 (53.2%) demonstrated the greatest need for support.

- ### Science
- 36.9% of Alaska students met grade-level expectations.
 - Students in grade 5 (42.2%) had the highest achievement levels.
 - Students in grade 8 (44.5%) demonstrated the greatest need for support.



[3] Sanitized version of National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Results, 2022, AK Department of Education

To review the actual NAEP scores for Alaska compared to all other US States, going back to 2003, go to **The Nation's Report Card** link in References.



We attended the White School

The Native ***Yakutat City School*** was run by the ***Bureau of Indian Affairs***. The White ***FAA School*** was run by the ***State of Alaska***. Although Alaska had been granted statehood it was not prepared to provide quality public education. Some of us survived anyway.

To understand how this system worked one must review what has been written by knowledgeable people who were there:

Even with statehood, different school systems existed for the purpose of educating the youth of the "Last Frontier." The educational system for Bush Alaska provided for competing programs within the state. The federal government sponsored schools through the Bureau of Indian Affairs; and the new state provided for elementary education through grade six and/or grade eight in many of the villages. Beyond those grade levels, educational opportunities for most of Alaska's "first citizens" did not exist unless the parents were willing to send their children to one of the larger towns in Alaska or to the "Lower 48." For several reasons, it was apparent changes would have to be made in this critical area either through educational innovation or by jurisdiction of the courts. First, rural parents no longer

agreed with the concept of sending 13- to 14- year-old children away from the village for junior and/or senior high school education. Second, it was no longer a manageable situation for the Alaska Department of Education to function both as a school district and as a department charged with the function of providing leadership to all the school districts located in the state. Third, the State Constitution mandated educational opportunity for all citizens of the state. These opportunities were not available to the rural parent whose village program might conclude at the sixth or eighth grade. Later historical developments and educational planning efforts required action by legislators, educators and the courts before the lack of secondary education programs was properly addressed. P 2-3,

[4] CREATION AND DISSOLUTION OF THE ALASKA STATE-OPERATED SCHOOL SYSTEM
Michael Bruce Slama, University of Wyoming ProQuest Dissertations & Theses, 1984. 8418783.

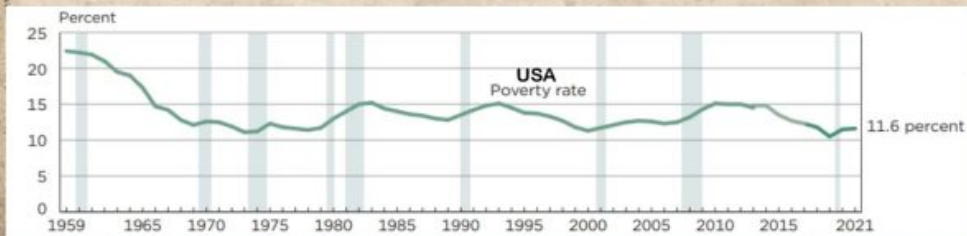
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60 Anti-Poverty

Postcard from Philippines

April 24, 2023 Manila, Republic of Philippines—The slogan on the shirt of this package delivery driver recognizes that education stems poverty. Other factors contribute but in USA the government's War on Poverty is still being fought as is documented on the graph at the bottom of this card. War on Poverty is the unofficial name for legislation first introduced by United States President Lyndon B. Johnson during his State of the Union address on January 8, 1964. This Legislation was proposed by Johnson in response to a national poverty rate of around 19%. Current Philippine poverty rate is estimated to be 23.7%. In his first State of the Nation Speech in July Pres. Marcos Jr. has said that rate will go down to 9% by 2028.



The writer of this dissertation expresses the typical litany of excuses why rural education didn't produce quality academic outcomes. Reality is resident parents who likely had not gone further than 6th or 8th

grade themselves saw no particular reason why their kids should go further if they were likely to just live a mostly subsistence life. Often when these kids went away, they became changed and unfit for rural living, or didn't come back at all. The argument that AKDEED was unable to simultaneously be both a school district and leader to all 50+ school districts in the state was specious at best. PhD candidate Slama states correctly that the AK Constitution mandates educational opportunities for all citizens. His assertion that this mandate could not be fulfilled if the schools only went to 6th or 8th grade is debatable. Since Statehood and until recently the SOA maintained a comprehensive Correspondence School. This assertion does not consider the actual educational needs of rural students but instead superimposes Outside values on traditional cultures. Finally, his conclusion based on these false premises, was that legislation and court actions were required to provide high schools throughout rural Alaska!

In a nutshell this is how our broken public education system continues to receive high funding for an academically unaccountable effort to maintain a 19th century system in steep decline. That system is imploding.



Marshall Lind was Commissioner of Education under Gov. **Jay Hammond** who signed the **Molly Hootch Consent Decree** resulting in 126 high schools being built in communities throughout the state.

Respectfully, as a product of AK Public Education, I submit this was pure bullshit by a special interest Educrat on his Alaska Adventure. He was an integral part of the failed system. His dissertation went so far as to participate in and attempt to document failure of the short-lived State Operated Schools System before it was rolled into today's Rural Education Attendance Area (REAA) cabal designed to join the quest for ever greater funding demanded by School Boards, Administrator Organizations, Teacher/Classified Employee unions and associated special interests dedicated to extorting elected officials for public funds in the name of education.

Further from Slama:

The dual educational systems for bush Alaska, the BIA or federal schools and the state schools staked out territories and more often competed for students than cooperated. It wasn't until 1963 that a

working agreement defined how BIA schools would be transferred to the state. However, educational facilities and programs were not upgraded. Secondary educational programs were an integral part of the city and borough schooling process; however, the typical rural program stopped at the sixth grade.
P 3-4

On July 1, 1971, the Alaska State Operated School System was created by legislative action. It was a quasi-state agency with a Board of Directors appointed by the Governor of Alaska. For the first time, rural teachers and on-base teachers at each of the military bases had a superintendent of schools. Due to large geographical expanses of territory, poor networks of communication, vague ideas about role differentiation between central office and regional superintendents, teacher activism, political intrigue, mismanagement, and lack of suitable bilingual materials, the Alaska State Operated School System agency was legislatively phased out of existence on June 30, 1975. On July 1, 1975, the Alaska Unorganized Borough School District became the successor agency with a life span of one year so as to develop and create the 21 Rural Education Attendance Areas, each an independent school district with its own superintendent and local board of education.

Today We Know what having High Schools in every Qualifying AK Village has Meant



*This dynamic of Alaska public education changed in the early 1970s. A group of Alaska Natives residing in Nunapitchuk—described then as an Eskimo village of 400 people located 410 miles west of Anchorage—decided that it was unfair to send rural students away to high school for nine months per year to get an education. Additionally, one **Anna Tobeluk** was to lend her name to a lawsuit against*

the State of Alaska because—as described by Andover, Massachusetts attorney **Stephen E. Cotton**—she was “an 18-year-old casualty of Alaska’s failure to provide (crappy) rural high schools.”

[5] Alaska Government School Failure; What will it Take to Fix Them? DONN LISTON November 29, 2019



Alaska public education has always been a system of replicating systems from other places with the goal of hiring the most government employees possible. Although most are Native majority communities the **State of Alaska** decides curriculum and programs with oversight by school boards whose primary mission is achieving maximum SOE funding for the community. With an elected school board, superintendent, other administrators as needed, teachers and support staff, schools are central to establishing the relevance of a community. When the school no longer can maintain the required number of students to qualify for state funding the community dies a lingering death. Teacher hiring decisions can consider how many children the family might bring to the district.

Yakutat Today



[6] Information about the Yakutat Tribe

Yakutat no longer needs a segregated school for the white kids whose parents are here for economic reasons. It now has a single School District, funded by SOE for which AKDEED provides academic results on their web page.

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The screenshot shows the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development website. The header includes the state logo and navigation links for 'myAlaska', 'Departments', and 'State Employees'. The main content area is titled '2022-2023 Yakutat School District Results' and includes links for 'View all results without filtering', 'Download Four-Way Supressed Data (.csv)', and 'Reporting Protocol - 2 Levels of Achievement (pdf)'. Below this, there are two identical tables for 'Alaska System of Academic Readiness (AK STAR) All Grades'. The first table is a header template, and the second table contains data for English Language Arts and Mathematics.

Alaska System of Academic Readiness (AK STAR)							
All Grades							
Subgroup	Advanced / Proficient		Approaching Proficient / Needs Support		Enrollment ²	Participation Rate	Group
	Count	Percentage ¹	Count	Percentage ¹			
English Language Arts	19	41.30%	27	58.70%	48	95.83%	View
Mathematics	14	30.43%	32	69.57%	48	95.83%	View

My Family’s School Experience

[7] NOTE: AKDEED lists Yakutat as having 106 students.

Because we lived at Ocean Cape, parents of the three families with kids there took turns driving us to school. We had a van with plenty of room for more. On one occasion at the beginning of the school year Dad stopped by the home of a Native family along the way and invited their kids to join us.

In June 1963, President John Kennedy asked Congress for a comprehensive civil rights bill, induced by massive resistance to desegregation and the murder of Medgar Evers. After Kennedy's assassination in November, President Lyndon Johnson pressed hard, with the support of Roy Wilkins and Clarence Mitchell, to secure the bill's passage the following year. In 1964, Congress passed Public Law 88-352 (78 Stat. 241). The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin. Provisions of this civil rights act forbade discrimination on the basis of sex, as well as, race in hiring, promoting, and firing. The Act prohibited discrimination in public accommodations and federally funded programs. It also strengthened the enforcement of voting rights and the desegregation of schools.

[8] Civil Rights Act of 1964,

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 had been passed on my birthday, July 2, 1964 and Dad saw no reason why those kids couldn't throw in with us at the State school. When the head teacher hesitated to take these children Dad contacted the Commissioner of Health, Education and Welfare in Juneau and our school was integrated.

Yakutat FAA School that year got State funding for more students than expected because Donald Liston, Sr. demanded Native children be integrated into the school intended for whites.

References:

[1] **Who Cares About YOUR Kid's Education?** DONN LISTON, August 11, 2020
<https://donnliston.net/2020/08/who-cares-about-your-kids-education/>

[2] **What is the soft bigotry of low expectations?** *Pacific Legal Foundation*, Nicole W.C. Yeatman, May 23, 2024
<https://pacificlegal.org/what-is-the-soft-bigotry-of-low-expectations/>

[3] **National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)** Results, 2022, AK Department of Education
<https://education.alaska.gov/assessment-results/District/DistrictResults?DistrictYear=2021-2022&IsScience=False&DistrictId=50>

To review the actual NAEP scores for Alaska compared to all other US States, going back to 2003, go to The **Nation's Report Card** at this link.

<https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile/overview/AK?chort=1&sub=MAT&sj=AK&sfj=NP&>

[4] **CREATION AND DISSOLUTION OF THE ALASKA STATE-OPERATED SCHOOL SYSTEM**, Michael Bruce Slama, *University of Wyoming* ProQuest Dissertations & Theses, 1984. 8418783.
<https://www.proquest.com/openview/ab4ff7b23c3845a30ff51530bec063/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>

[5] **Alaska Government School Failure; What will it Take to Fix Them?** DONN LISTON, November 29, 2019
<https://donnliston.net/2019/11/alaskaspublic-education-failure-what/>

[6] Information about the Yakutat Tribe
<https://yakutattingittribe.org/about/>

The City and Borough of Yakutat is located on the northern coast of the Gulf of Alaska, approximately 200 miles from the capital city of Juneau and 300 miles from Anchorage. Yakutat (Yaakwdáat) encompasses about 9,460 square miles, and is situated along the turbulent crescent Saint Elias Range on the northern part of the panhandle in Southeast Alaska. Yaakwdáat is the farthest north Southeast Alaska community. Its name is suggestive of the time when it was renowned as a major hub for trade.

Yakutat serves as a home to about 800 residents, of which half are Native. The Natives comprise of three main stocks of people, namely the Tlingits that migrated from the southeastern panhandle, the Athabascans that travelled along the Alsek River from the interior, and the Copper River People who traversed from the Copper River Delta.

[7] NOTE: AKDEED lists Yakutat as having 106 students.
<https://education.alaska.gov/data-center>

[8] **Civil Rights Act of 1964,**

<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/oasam/civil-rights-center/statutes/civil-rights-act-of-1964#:~:text=The%20Civil%20Rights%20Act%20of%201964%20prohibits%20discrimination%20on%20th>

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