

# Early Childhood & Elementary Special Education Department

Dana Dugdale, Director  
Anita Allen, Coordinator  
Lynn Jordan, Coordinator  
Regina Rollins, Coordinator  
Vicki Jefts, Coordinator  
Sue Schade, Principal, Mt. Iliamna  
Chris Fraczek, Coordinator, Mt. Iliamna

## Department Description

The EC&E Special Education Department is responsible for the provision and oversight of special education services for students experiencing disabilities from age 3 through the elementary grades. The EC&E Department is comprised of four major programs: the Early Childhood (preschool) Program, the Elementary Program, the Mt. Iliamna Behavioral Support Program and the IEP Clerical Support Program.

### Early Childhood Special Education Program

The Early Childhood Special Education program provides and oversees services for children age 3 to 5 who experience developmental delays or other disabilities. The Early Childhood program has seven main functions:

1. Collaborate with infant learning programs to transition children from infant services to school district special education services, as mandated under IDEA
2. Maintain ChildFind activities such as the ChildCheck process, as mandated under IDEA
3. Assess children for eligibility for special education and related services
4. Provide a continuum of educational placements for preschool students based on the student's least restrictive environment
5. Design and implement special education services and supports (IEPs) for preschool students
6. Collaborate and coordinate service delivery with other special education departments
7. Collaborate with community childcare providers, private preschool teachers and agency personnel to support special education students

Students eligible for special education must receive special education services in their "least restrictive environment." Under IDEA, school districts are required to maintain a full continuum of educational placement options for students. The IEP team determines the educational placement for each student. Descriptions of the educational placements available for ASD preschool students are as follows:

**Itinerant Speech Services.** Children with mild to moderate speech language delays and who are eligible for speech language services *only*, may receive itinerant speech services either at their neighborhood elementary school or at a

school closest to the childcare setting. A speech language pathologist provides these services which have an emphasis on normal developmental sequences for language and articulation. Parents provide transportation.

**Community-based Itinerant Special Education Services (Community-based Assistance and Resources in Early Education- CARE teams).** Children eligible for preschool special education services may receive special education services in a community setting such as a private preschool, childcare site, home or Head Start site as appropriate for their individual needs. Itinerant teams consisting of a preschool special education teacher and two teacher assistants provide these services. The emphasis is on providing special education interventions needed for the child to be successful in the normal setting. Team members collaborate with community providers to best meet the developmental needs of the child.

**2-Day Communication Classes.** Children with moderate to severe speech language delays who are eligible for speech language services but who have no other significant developmental delays may receive services in a specialized language classroom setting. The emphasis is to provide a preschool environment which promotes language acquisition and articulation skills. These classrooms are located regionally within the ASD and provide services two mornings a week: Monday-Tuesday or Wednesday-Thursday. Transportation is provided by ASD.

**4-Day Intensive Classes.** Children with moderate to profound disabilities who require extensive Related Services supports and significant special education support may receive special education services in a self-contained preschool classroom. The classroom setting promotes development of communication, cognition, social, self-help skills, pre-academic skills, fine-motor and gross-motor skills. These classrooms are located geographically throughout the ASD. Students attend either AM or PM sessions, four days a week: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Transportation is provided by ASD.

**5-Day Autism Classes.** Children whose disability places them within the Autism Spectrum and who require extensive special education and related services support may receive services in an autism classroom. A variety of research-based methodologies provide the foundation for these classes which emphasize the development of communication, self-help and social/behavioral skills. These classrooms are located geographically throughout the ASD. Students attend five days a week, 4.5 hours daily. Transportation is provided by ASD.

**4-Day Intensive Behavioral Classes.** See Mt. Iliamna program description.

### **Elementary Special Education Program**

The Elementary special education program provides and oversees special education services for children in the elementary grades. The Elementary special education program has seven main functions:

1. Assess students for eligibility for special education in disability categories under IDEA
2. Design and implement Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for students eligible for special education services
3. Provide Child Find information in the community and provide special education services for students in private school settings as mandated under IDEA
4. Provide a continuum of educational placements for elementary students based on the student's least restrictive environment
5. Support transitions for special education students
6. Collaborate with regular education programs to support special education students
7. Collaborate and coordinate service delivery with other special education departments

Students eligible for special education must receive special education services in their "least restrictive environment." Under IDEA, school districts are required to maintain a full continuum of educational placement options for students. The IEP team determines the educational placement for each student. Descriptions of the educational placements on the continuum are as follows:

**Resource Classes.** Resource programs are available at all elementary schools to provide services and supports for special education students whose disabilities are in the mild to severe range. The focus of the resource special education program is primarily academic (Reading, Writing, and Math) although a variety of services and supports such as social skills or behavioral support are also provided. Instruction given within the resource program is typically remedial, with a strong emphasis on direct instruction and skill acquisition for students. Special education staff members work closely with regular educators to provide accommodations or modifications for students in the regular classroom. Special education transportation is provided only if indicated on the IEP.

**Extended Resource Classes.** Students with moderate to severe disabilities who require special education services and support for the majority of or the entire school day may receive their services in an Extended Resource classroom. Students in ER settings have significant academic delays and may require specialized or highly modified curriculum. Students may also have social/behavioral difficulties which are best supported in a smaller, more structured classroom setting. Students spend varying times in both the regular education classroom setting and in the ER classroom as detailed in the individual IEP. The individual student IEP forms the basis and guides the instruction given to students in the Extended Resource program. Extended Resource classes provide daily services for students and are available throughout the school day. Special education transportation is provided by ASD.

**Intensive Needs Classes.** Students with severe to profound disabilities (often multiple disabilities) who require fulltime special education services, specialized curriculum and significant Related Services support may receive special education services in an Intensive Needs classroom. These classes are located

geographically throughout the ASD within neighborhood elementary schools. The emphasis in the Intensive Needs setting is on *functional* academic skills, life skills, (such as feeding, toileting or walking), and basic social communication skills. Often students in Intensive Needs classes have significant health concerns and may require nursing services during their school day. Students are not precluded from participating in regular education settings although participation typically supports *individual* student goals rather than full academic access to regular education curriculum. Intensive Needs classes provide daily, fulltime services for students. Special education transportation is provided by ASD.

**Autism Classes.** Children whose disability places them within the autism spectrum and who require extensive special education and related services support may receive services in an autism self-contained classroom. A variety of research-based methodologies provide the foundation for these classes which emphasize the development of communication, self-help and social/behavioral skills as well as academics as appropriate for each student's developmental level. Autism classrooms are located geographically throughout the ASD. Students may participate in regular education settings as detailed in their IEP. Autism classes provide daily, fulltime services for students. Special education transportation is provided by ASD.

**Intensive Behavioral Support Classes.** See Mt. Iliamna program description.

**Home-based Services or Visiting Teacher Services.** Children whose disability or medical needs preclude their attending school may receive home-based or visiting teacher services. If at all possible, the special education staff at the neighborhood school or regional classroom site should provide the home-based services for the student. Home-based services are provided in response to a student's *chronic* medical needs. Home-based services are limited in scope and are based on the team's recommendations outlined in the IEP. Visiting-teacher services differ from home-based services in that the services are viewed as *temporary* due to an injury or illness. If at all possible, the special education staff at the neighborhood school or regional classroom site provides the visiting-teacher or home-based services.

**Institutional Services.** Institutional-based services are provided primarily in out of district placements. A representative of the Special Education division tracks ASD students in outside placements and participates in IEP meetings, progress conferences or discharge conferences via telephone.

### **Mt. Iliamna Behavioral Support Services Program**

The behavioral support program at Mt. Iliamna provides services and supports for students preschool through fourth grade who experience intensive social, behavioral and mental health disabilities. (Students with these needs in grades four through sixth attend Whaley School.) Positive behavioral support services are provided in a therapeutic environment for students with an emphasis on individually appropriate academic instruction in all areas. Students in this setting may receive a variety of supports and services including counseling,

social skill instruction, and affective education as well as related services such as speech language services and occupational therapy. The Mt. Iliamna Behavioral Support program has seven main functions:

1. Assess students' social/behavioral needs through functional behavioral and other assessments
2. Design and implement Individual Education Plans (IEPs) which reflect appropriate interventions for students with intensive social/behavioral disabilities.
3. Provide remedial and developmental instruction for all students as appropriate to their individual needs
4. Provide a variety of services, supports and settings specifically designed to help students progress toward individual goals and objectives.
5. Support student transitions into the Mt Iliamna program and as appropriate, out to other settings including neighborhood school programs.
6. Collaborate with a variety of community agencies that provide support to students attending Mt. Iliamna
7. Collaborate and coordinate with other special education departments

Descriptions of the class environments at Mt. Iliamna are as follows:

**4-Day Intensive Behavior preschool class.** Children in this setting may receive a variety of supports including counseling, social skill instruction, affective education as well as developmentally appropriate instruction in the major domains of early childhood education. Students attend four days a week, 2.5 hours daily. Transportation is provided by ASD.

**Intensive Behavior elementary classes.** This setting promotes the acquisition of appropriate social/behavioral skills and specifically addresses the student's individual behavioral and academic needs in a classroom environment. Students attend five days a week, full day in this special school setting. Transportation is provided by ASD.

**Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) Services.** Children with *profound* behavioral disabilities may receive their special education services in the Applied Behavioral Analysis program. The ABA program is the most restrictive setting on the educational continuum in ASD. This setting is designed for students whose behavioral needs cannot be met in any other setting within the ASD. Each student in the ABA program requires a highly individualized academic and behavioral support program delivered in a 1:1 setting. The ABA program is designed to provide safety, physiological comfort, and optimum engagement and response opportunities. The principles of Applied Behavioral Analysis guide the development of student programs. Students attend five days a week, in this special school setting. The ABA program at Mt. Iliamna is currently being developed; primary ABA site is housed at Whaley Center. Transportation is provided by ASD.

## **IEP Clerical Support Program**

The IEP Clerical Support Clerk program began with seven Clericals in December 2001. Currently, there are 42 Clericals supporting Preschool, Elementary, Mid-Level and High Schools throughout the district. IEP Clerical Support Clerks work 7 hours per day and typically have a caseload of 200 to 300 students. New IEP Clericals receive an initial training which includes an overview of special education, confidentiality, the IEP process and computer orientation. New IEP Clericals are also assigned a Mentor, an experienced IEP Clerical with at least two years of experience, to assist them during their first year in the position.

Clerical duties include:

1. Tracking IEP and Eligibility due dates
2. Organizing paperwork
3. Sending completed paperwork into the Special Education Records Dept.
4. Typing in information received from teachers
5. Sorting, copying, distributing and filing documents pertaining to IEP meetings
6. Scheduling IEP Meetings and providing IEP team with weekly meeting schedule
7. Maintaining and organizing files
8. Maintain and update databases tracking HSGQE, due dates, accommodations, etc.

## Early Childhood and Elementary Special Education Placement Continuum in ASD

<u>Placement</u>	<u>Program Description</u>	<u>ASD Location</u>	<u>Setting Description</u>	<u>Supports Needed in Setting</u>
1. Regular classroom with additional support services supervised by special education personnel.	<p><b>Resource Program</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accommodations and modifications to the regular curriculum implemented by gen ed teacher.</li> <li>Special ed hours defined on IEP (typically low hours)</li> <li>School space required: 2 Resource teachers = 1 classroom</li> </ul>	<p><u>Preschool:</u> Itinerant Preschool Services (CARE teams) available at a variety of home and community sites</p> <p><u>Elementary:</u> Located at all ASD elementary schools</p>	<p><u>Preschool:</u> services in community settings and home Staffing: 25 students = 1 FTE/12 TA hrs</p> <p><u>Elementary:</u> services provided in regular classroom Staffing: 20 students = 1 FTE/2 TA hrs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consultation with reg. ed tchr</li> <li>Accommodations and modifications to reg. ed curriculum</li> </ul>
2. Regular classroom with direct service from special education personnel.	<p><b>Resource Program</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Special ed services provided in the regular ed classroom by special ed teacher or teacher assistant</li> <li>Special ed hours may vary, defined on IEP</li> <li>School space required: 2 Resource teachers = 1 classroom</li> </ul>	<p><u>Preschool:</u> Itinerant Preschool Services (CARE teams) available at a variety of home and community sites</p> <p><u>Elementary:</u> Located at all ASD elementary schools</p>	<p><u>Preschool:</u> services in community settings and home Staffing: 25 students = 1 FTE/12 TA hrs</p> <p><u>Elementary:</u> Regular classroom Staffing: 20 students = 1 FTE/2 TA hrs</p>	<p>Accommodations to reg. ed curriculum</p> <p>Modifications to reg. ed curriculum</p> <p>Specific instruction in classroom to help student progress in reg. ed curriculum</p>
3. Regular education environment with special education itinerant or resource support.	<p><b>Resource Program</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Special ed services provided in a separate setting not in regular ed classroom. ("Pull out" services)</li> <li>Special ed hours may vary, defined on IEP</li> <li>School space required: 2 Resource teachers = 1 classroom</li> </ul>	<p><u>Preschool:</u> Itinerant Preschool Services (CARE teams) available at community preschool and childcare sites</p> <p><u>Elementary:</u> Located at all ASD elementary schools</p>	<p><u>Preschool:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"pullout" services in community preschool and childcare sites.</li> <li>Staffing: 25 students = 1 FTE/12 TA hrs</li> </ul> <p><u>Elementary:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resource classroom</li> <li>Staffing: (allocation based on prorating of the following: 20 LOS1 students = 1 FTE &amp; 2 TA hrs; 10 LOS2 students = 1 FTE &amp; 5 TA hrs; 8 LOS 3 students = 1 FTE &amp; 14 TA hrs)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accommodations and/or modifications to reg. ed. curriculum</li> <li>Specific instruction to help student progress in reg. ed curriculum</li> <li>Specific skill instruction with alternative curriculum to meet child's need in skill deficit area</li> <li>Small group instruction (10 or fewer students)</li> <li>Behavioral support as per individual student IEP</li> <li>Social skills instruction</li> <li>Provision of testing accommodations or alternate assessments</li> </ul>
4. Regular education environment with self-contained classroom support	<p><b>Self-contained Special Education Classrooms</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Primary placement is self-contained classroom</li> <li>Variety of self-contained classes (see below)</li> <li>Participation in regular ed as appropriate for student</li> <li>School space required: 1 self-contained sped teacher = 1 classroom</li> </ul>	<p><u>Preschool:</u> self-contained classes located regionally within elementary schools; locations vary, see below</p> <p><u>Elementary:</u> self-contained classes located regionally within elementary schools; locations vary, see below</p>	<p>Self contained special ed classrooms in neighborhood schools. Supports and focus of program vary by type of self-contained class. Staffing varies by type of self-contained class</p>	<p>Supports provided within all Self-contained Classrooms programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specific instruction designed for students with moderate to profound disabilities</li> <li>Specialized classroom environment to promote skill development, generalization of skills, student independence</li> <li>Class environment structured to control environmental variables</li> </ul>

## Early Childhood and Elementary Special Education Placement Continuum in ASD

<u>Placement</u>	<u>Program Description</u>	<u>ASD Location</u>	<u>Setting Description</u>	<u>Supports Needed in Setting</u>
	<p><u>Extended Resource</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Majority of sped services provided within ER classroom</li> <li>Elementary: 8-10 students with 20-32.5 hrs of sped service a week designated on individual IEP</li> <li>Elementary: Ratio: 1:3 (adult/student)</li> </ul>	<p><u>Preschool:</u> services provided in 4-day program (see description below)  <u>Elementary:</u> Located regionally within elementary schools. Locations 05/06: <u>primary ER:</u> Fire Lake, Northwood, Susitna <u>Intermediate ER:</u> Willow Crest</p>	<p><u>Preschool:</u> Staffing: (see description below)  <u>Elementary:</u>                      Staffing: 8-10 students = 1 FTE w/14 TA hrs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accommodations and/or modifications of reg. Ed curriculum</li> <li>Alternate curriculum due to significant delays</li> <li>Behavioral support as per individual IEP</li> <li>Testing accommodations or alternate assessment</li> <li>Social Skills instruction</li> <li>Functional skills if appropriate</li> <li>Sped transportation if appropriate for location or student</li> </ul>
	<p><u>Intensive Needs</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Majority of sped services provided within IN classroom</li> <li>Elementary: 6-8 students with full special ed support (32.5 hrs of sped service a week)</li> <li>Ratio: Preschool: 1:3; Elementary 1:2 (adult/student)</li> </ul>	<p><u>Preschool:</u> 4-day program (M-Th) am &amp; pm sessions; Locations 05/06: Bowman, Eagle River, Northwood, O'Malley, Orion, Ravenwood, Turnagain, Chester Valley, Ursa Major, Nunaka Valley. Huffman  <u>Elementary:</u> Locations 05/06: Abbott Loop, Airport Hts, Baxter, Creekside Park, Denali, Fire Lake, Kincaid, Lake Otis, Rabbit Creek, Tyson.</p>	<p><u>Preschool:</u>                      Staffing: 8 students = 1 FTE w/ 6-12 TA hrs (per session)                      Elementary: 6-8 students = 1 FTE w/20 TA hrs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alternate curriculum</li> <li>Setting supports students with severe/profound multiple disabilities areas</li> <li>Multiple related services typically integrated into classroom</li> <li>Life skills/ self-help skills: walking, talking, toileting, etc.</li> <li>Emphasis on communication skills; augmentative communication</li> <li>Functional behavioral/social support</li> <li>Entire school day supported and structured by special ed, i.e. continuous service</li> <li>Sped Transportation</li> </ul>
	<p><u>Autism Spectrum Classrooms</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Majority of special ed services provided in the AS classroom</li> <li>6-8 students with full special ed support (32.5 hrs of sped service a week)</li> <li>Ratio: 1:2.5 (adult/student)</li> </ul>	<p><u>Preschool:</u> Locations 05/06: Nunaka Valley, O'Malley, Bowman, Northwood, Ursa Minor  <u>Elementary:</u> Primary (K-2) class Locations 05/06: Airport Hts, Bowman, Fire Lake, North Star                      Intermediate (3-6) Location 05/06: Scenic Park</p>	<p><u>Preschool:</u> Staffing: 6-8 students = 1 FTE w/ 12 TA hrs, 1 daily session: M-F 9:00-1:30  <u>Elementary:</u> Staffing: 6-8 students = 1 FTE w/14 TA hrs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structured teaching based on the TEACCH program</li> <li>Classroom engineered to promote student independence based on TEACCH methodology</li> <li>High use of visual structures in environment</li> <li>Social communication/play skills taught</li> <li>Pre-Academic and Academic skill emphasis</li> <li>Reg. Ed or alternate curriculum used as appropriate for individual skill development</li> <li>Integrated related services; particularly OT and Speech</li> <li>High emphasis on sensory programs</li> <li>Entire school day supported and structured by special ed, i.e. continuous service</li> <li>Special ed Transportation</li> </ul>
5. Full-time instruction in a separate day school.	<p><b>Behavioral Support Program</b>                      Full time special education in special education school with no access to reg ed classes or peers. Students with 32.5 hrs of sped service a week.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6-8 students with full special ed support (32.5 hrs of sped service a week)</li> <li>Ratio: 1:2.5 (adult/student)</li> </ul>	<p><u>Preschool:</u> Mt. Iliamna Behavioral Support Classroom  <u>Elementary:</u> grK-3: Mt. Iliamna Behavioral Support Classrooms, gr4-6: Whaley School</p>	<p><u>Preschool:</u> Staffing: 8 students per session (am and pm sessions) = 1 FTE w/ 14 TA hrs.  <u>Elementary:</u> Staffing: 8 students = 1 FTE w/ 14 TA hrs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extensive behavioral support services including ongoing use of Kid Focus; FBAs, Positive Behavioral Support Plans</li> <li>Academic support: accommodations and/or modifications of reg. ed curriculum</li> <li>Alternate curriculum for specific skills development due to severe deficits</li> <li>Counseling in a therapeutic environment</li> <li>Individual and small group counseling and</li> </ul>

## Early Childhood and Elementary Special Education Placement Continuum in ASD

<u>Placement</u>	<u>Program Description</u>	<u>ASD Location</u>	<u>Setting Description</u>	<u>Supports Needed in Setting</u>
				social skills instruction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personnel trained in de-escalation and safe restraint</li> <li>• Small group or 1:1 instruction as appropriate</li> <li>• Test accommodations</li> <li>• Continuous special education programming throughout school day</li> <li>• Special ed Transportation</li> </ul>
6. Home or hospital instruction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special education for a portion of the day for students who are unable to attend school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special Schools, Homebound Instruction</li> </ul>	Home or Hospital – Usually a teacher or a TA is sent to give instruction to the child. Usually 1 – 3 hours of sped service a week	Specific skill instruction with alternative curriculum to meet child's need in skill deficit area Alternate curriculum to address significant skill deficits
7. Institution services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual programming based on the institution.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Out of district placement</li> </ul>	Institution out of district	Alternate curriculum to address significant skill deficits

## EC&E Caseload and PTR

Special education teachers within the EC&E program are highly impacted not only by overall student enrollment, which has continued to rise, but also by the increasing needs of their students. Enrollment in elementary typically increases by as much as 30% during the school due to new referrals, students moving in, etc. Preschool enrollment typically increases during the school year by 50% due to Child Find and ongoing preschool assessments. Pupil/Teacher Ratio continues to be of utmost concern as illustrated by the following statistics:

**Elementary** overall PTR (including Mt. Iliamna): **20.7:1**

Elementary special education programs PTRs:

Resource:	<b>23.5:1</b>
Intensive Needs:	<b>6.9:1</b>
Autism:	<b>5.8:1</b>
Extended Res:	<b>6.8:1</b>
Mt. Iliamna:	<b>7.4:1</b>

**Preschool** overall PTR (including classes & CARE): **15.7:1**

Preschool special education programs PTRs:

CARE:	<b>22:1</b>
2-Day Classes:	<b>23:1</b>
4-Day Classes:	<b>13.2:1</b>
Autism:	<b>4.5:1</b>

## EC&E Department Trends and Challenges

**Budget concerns.** EC&E has several budget challenges:

1. *An ongoing need for additional allocation* of teachers and teacher assistants. For 2005-06, 3.0 FTE teachers and 18.3 FTE teacher assistants were added to the elementary special education budget and 3.0 FTE teachers and 16.5 FTE teacher assistants were added to the preschool budget. However, these allocations do not cover the increased requests for additional allocation, particularly of teacher assistant time, from the schools.
2. *The need to purchase specialized equipment* such as computers, standers, chairs, sensory equipment and supplies for students with more significant disabilities.
3. *The cost of establishing new self-contained classes.* The cost of equipment, materials and curriculum for new classes is approximately \$9,000 per class with preschool classes being slightly more expensive at \$10,000 due to the furniture needed for smaller students. This school year, EC&E established five new preschool classes, three new autism classes, two new extended resource classes and four additional classes at Mt. Iliamna.
4. *The need to update and equip our Resource programs with appropriate remedial curriculum* for students below proficiency levels on standards based assessments.

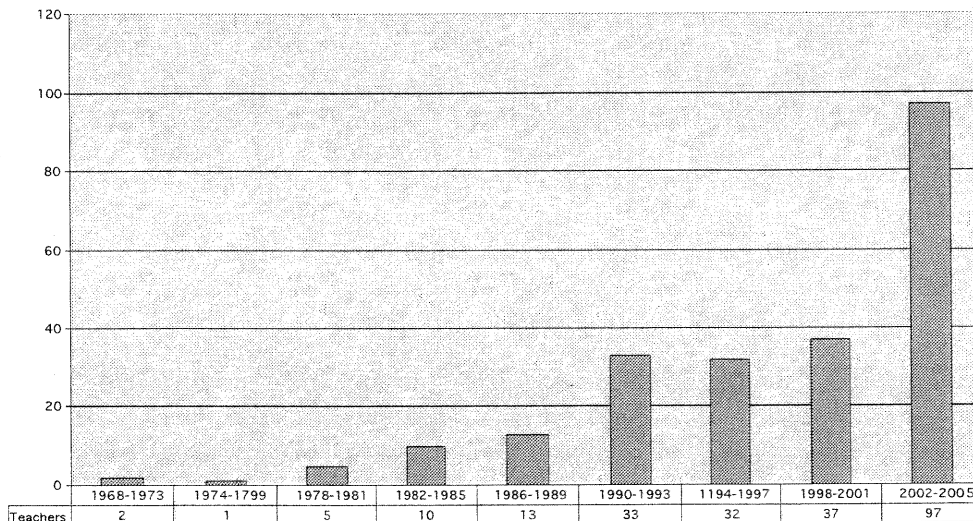
**Training.** EC&E has a comprehensive staff development plan for all staff. Training for all EC&E teachers is scheduled three times a year; these department-wide trainings provide information that all staff should know, i.e. state mandated trainings due to monitoring, etc. In addition, each specialized group with the EC&E department has specific training provided for their particular needs on an ongoing basis through the school year. EC&E also provides credit classes through the ASDTA each June, three weeks of scheduled training in August, TA training twice yearly and a minimum of 3 credit classes each the school year. This is in addition to the numerous trainings given on-site at schools.

Training topics so far this school year have included: Reading Mastery, Houghton Mifflin Reading, ABA training, TEACCH training, Behavioral Strategies, Crisis Intervention training, Sign Language, Preschool Assessment, and IDEA 2004. Training has also been provided for new EC&E staff: teachers, teacher assistants and clericals. New elementary principals have also had two training sessions on special education topics.

**Recruitment/Retention.** Recruitment of experienced, qualified special education teachers continues to be challenging. Hiring of "generalist" special education teachers, while challenging, is relatively easier than recruiting teachers within specialty areas such as autism, emotional disturbance, intensive needs and preschool. Recruiting for these specialty areas is a high priority and is done on a nation-wide and international basis.

The majority of EC&E teachers are new to special education and new to the district. The below graph, based on this year's teacher force (preschool and elementary) illustrates the significant increase in new teachers the past seven school years with approximately 60% of teachers entering ASD within the past 6 years. Ninety percent of the teacher work force has been added within the past 12 years. Veteran teachers or those close to the 20-year mark comprise only 8% of the workforce.

Teacher Longevity - School Year 2005/2006  
Based on Date of Hire



**Facilities.** The EC&E department includes two facilities: Mt. Iliamna School and the Early Intervention Services Center, new this fall. In addition, we routinely work with other district departments on issues of space and access for special education students in neighborhood schools.

1. *Mt. Iliamna.* The Mt. Iliamna building previously housed preschool special ed classes for a number of years. The building meets the *majority* of needs for the elementary behavioral support program, however, there have been some needed modifications to the facility to support the change of program. Changes such as modifying space for quiet areas, a library, and highly specialized individual spaces have been the priority. Future needs include restoring the gym for elementary students, adding a kitchen (current hot lunch program is run from the faculty lounge), adding plexiglas to lower windows, and adding more appropriately sized playground equipment.
2. *Early Intervention Services Center.* This new center space is located in the Minnesota Mall. Several preschool programs are housed in this space: preschool assessment teams which operate year around, Child Check personnel, CARE teams, and four sessions of our 2-day Communication classes. Bringing these programs together have greatly increased the efficiency of the preschool program and has made these services much

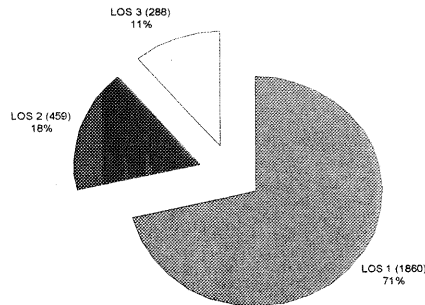
more accessible for parents. Previously, these programs were housed within several elementary schools and with the move to the EIS Center, space has been freed up for other uses such as 4-day preschool classes.

3. *Space within schools.* Space for special education programs within elementary schools is challenging to find. This includes both the classroom space needed for self contained classes such as preschool classes or autism classes and the added spaces needed for related services staff, specialized equipment storage, etc.

## Trends in Student Population

**Increasing numbers of students with significant needs.** Enrollment of Level 2 and Level 3 students with significant disabilities continues to rise. Below is a graph illustrating current enrollment by level of service categories:

Elementary Special Ed only LOS 1, 2 & 3 as of Nov 2005

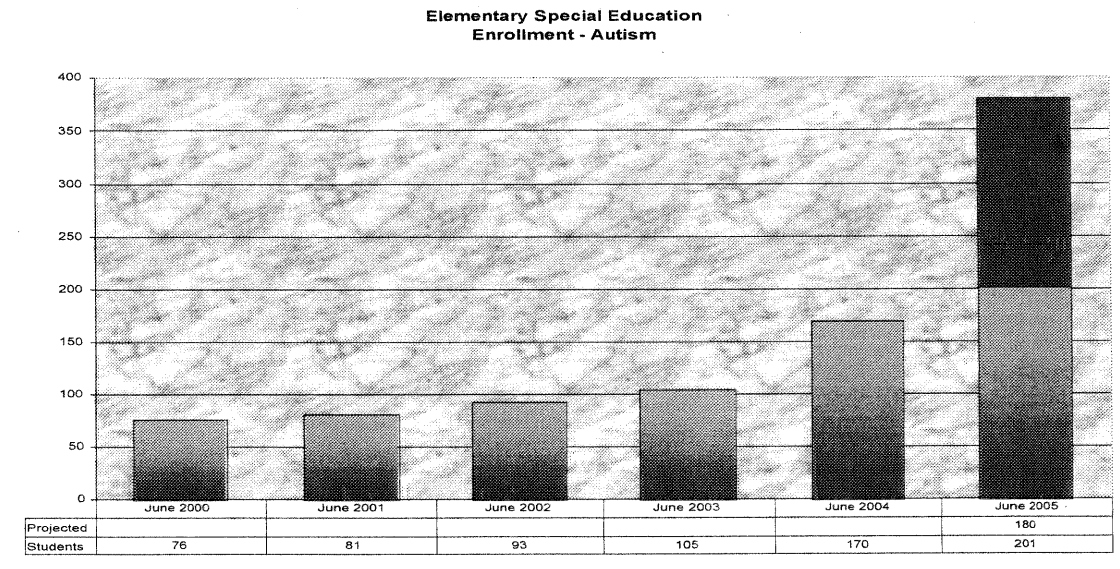


**Autism.** The majority of students with autism are in the EC&E department. This is due to several factors: the early identification in infant services and preschool assessment, the significant increase in families relocating to ASD from other Alaska districts or outside districts, and the rotation of military families. It is estimated that approximately 8% of EC&E students (PreK-6) have the certification of Autism or Autism associated with other disabilities. Since Autism is a spectrum disorder, students experiencing autism are present in all educational settings within the EC&E department from Resource classes to our most restrictive settings such as our ABA program. The mandate is to the appropriate setting, services, supports and instruction to meet the needs of the individual student.

The EC&E program has responded to this challenge in a number of ways:

1. Priority training for all staff on autism; including teachers, teacher assistants, regular ed teachers, administrators, related services staff
2. Consultation by experts within the field of autism
3. Advanced training for teacher consultants who support building teams
4. Establishing two "cadres" of teachers highly trained in working with students with autism. Goal is to have one of these teachers in each elementary school to give collegial support and provide on-site training
5. Establishing specialized autism classes; currently, there are 10 classes (PreK-6). These classes support students who need all interactions, environments, and instruction highly structured and modified for their needs.
6. Specialized summer programs for students with autism
7. Recruitment of teachers with experience and training in autism

The graph below illustrates the increase in the number of students with the certification of Autism over the past several years. The shaded area for June 2005 represents the estimated number of students who don't have the certificate of autism, but autism is an associated disability.

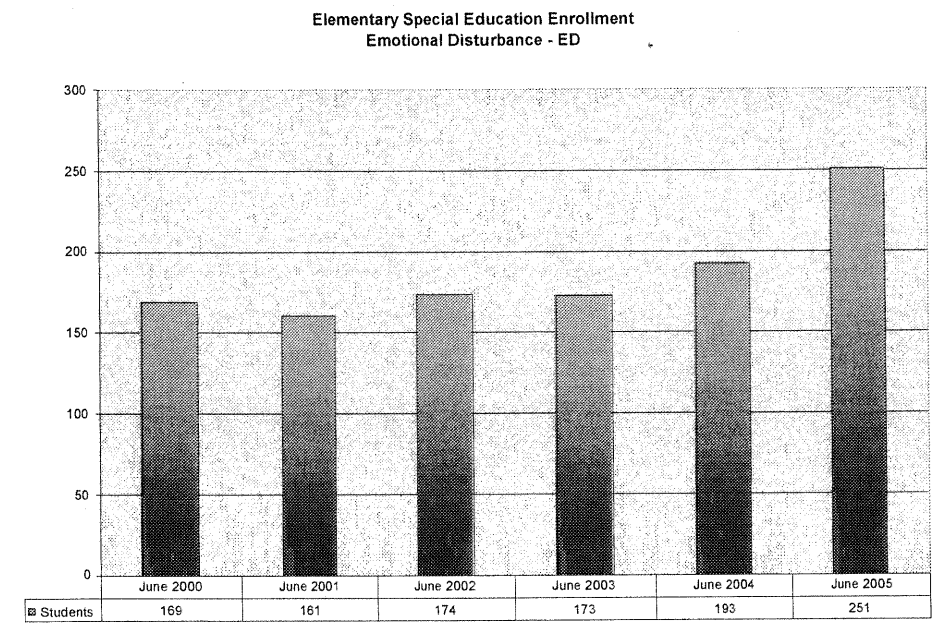


**Emotional Disturbance.** The numbers of students with the certification of Emotional Disturbance has risen in recent years. Also of significant impact is the number of students with social/behavioral challenges who have other certifications such as Early Childhood Development Delays, Other Health Impaired, Multiple Disabilities, and others. Students requiring behavioral support make the majority of students designated as Level 2 students – meaning that over 50% of school time is provided or supported through special education. Providing behavioral interventions and instruction to change behavior is very challenging for teachers as it must be done in conjunction to continuing academic instruction. The EC&E department has responded to this challenge in several ways:

1. Priority training for all staff on positive behavioral supports, behavior intervention plans and strategies
2. Facilitation for “Kid Focus” meetings: teams meet to do a functional analysis of the behavior and establish a plan to assist the student. Last year, teacher consultants facilitated over 200 Kid Focus meetings.
3. Consultation and training with outside experts
4. Establishing placement options for students who require smaller class placements or specialized placements
5. Establishing program at Mt. Iliamna which has a focus on behavioral remediation, counseling and mental health supports. Enrollment at Mt. Iliamna has increased by 300% in one year.
6. Specialized summer programs for students with behavioral challenges to prevent regression

7. Active recruiting of teachers with a specialty in the area of Emotional Disturbance.

The graph below illustrates the increase in the numbers of elementary students with the certification of Emotional Disturbance in recent years. However, the true impact of this challenge is not fully visible from the graph as behavior is an area of service on many IEPs for students with different certifications.



**Preschool.** As with elementary, we have seen a significant increase in both the numbers of students and the intensity of services required. September enrollments have increased by 100% from previous years (previously September enrollment typically 200 students, this year we opened with 404 students). Because preschool students enter services at age 3, enrollment grows rapidly throughout the school year. Our June enrollment numbers have increased by 70% from June 2000 to June 2005. We anticipate a record enrollment by June 2006.

The preschool program underwent a yearlong review during school year 2002-2003. At that time it was found that students were waiting an average of 6 months for special education evaluation and that services were not being provided in either a timely or appropriate manner. The EC&E program responded to this challenge in a number of ways:

1. A full continuum of specialized educational placements is now available for preschool students, i.e. 2 and 4-day classes, autism classes and behavioral support classes.
2. CARE team program started which provides special education services and consultation for students in community sites such as Head Start, private daycares and preschools, or at home.

3. Child Find, a requirement under IDEA, has been refocused with the number of screenings done during the year has nearly doubled from previous years.
4. The preschool assessment process has been refined and expedited
5. Cooperative agreements have been established with infant programs to facilitate the transition for students into ASD services at age 3.
6. Priority training is being given to preschool teachers to increase skills in working with an increasing significant population of preschool students
7. Active recruiting of certified and experienced preschool special education teachers is ongoing
8. The Early Intervention Services Center was opened this fall, bringing together the different functions of the preschool program for efficiency and access.

Below is current (11/15/05) information on the preschool program:

**Total enrollment**

04-05 530 preschool students

05-06 436 preschool students to date; plus 21 eligible and will have IEP's completed by 12/16; Projected enrollment by 1/3 – 457

Projected enrollment by end of the school year based on 65% eligibility (this is a very conservative estimate) 567. This will be the largest enrollment ever.

**Increase in enrollment due to several factors:**

*Out-of-district enrollment* – An increasing number of families are moving into the district with preschool children with IEP's.

04-05 33 preschool children enrolled with out-of-district IEPs; 18 of those children went to kindergarten this school year.

05-06 To date 18 preschool children have enrolled with out of district IEP's

*Agency referrals* – With increased community awareness through advertising, letters and CARE team providers, agency referrals have increased 20%. From 7/1/2005 to date 83 children have been referred from other agencies.

*ILP Referrals* – Referrals from Infant Learning Programs have increased. Typically 150 children are referred from ILP programs each year. Last year 182 children were referred from ILP. This year 88 children have been referred from ILP so far. It is noted that the referrals from the Eagle River area ILP program have decreased; the Anchorage ILP program referrals have increased.

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*Screening* – We have the capacity to screen more children with the new Child Find Specialist position (10/04), by working collaboratively with area Head Start programs, and by training other ASD Early Childhood program (CIT-H and Child in Transition) staff to screen children.

In 2003-04, doing the group screenings with TA's, 297 children were screened.

In 2004-05, the total number of children screened was 319

In 2005/06, 85 children have been screened. We are projected to screen another 265 children from now through June 30 making out yearly total 350.