

**ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
PROFILE OF PERFORMANCE  
1997-98**

**FACT SHEET**

**School Goals**

- All schools pursued goals focused on improving student achievement.
- All schools reported positive activities directed toward attainment of school goals.
- All schools reported some success in implementing activities directed toward improving achievement and instruction. (See also "Superintendent's End-of-Year Report" on goal attainment for 1997-98).

**Student Demographic Characteristics**

- More than 48,600 students attended school in Anchorage last year, up almost 1,400 from five years ago. The increase from 1996-97 to 1997-98 was some 700 students, making 1997-98 another record enrollment year.
- The non-Caucasian proportion of the District's student population reached 33 percent, up 4 percent from five years ago.
- American Natives have been the fastest growing group over the past five years. This group is now close to 12 percent of the student population, including more than 5,644 Native elementary and secondary students.
- Most students, almost 80 percent, stay in the same school for the entire school year though the year-to-year continuity in the same school is lower at 55 percent.
- The number of students from families with income low enough to qualify for free or reduced price lunch in elementary grades reached 8,360. Thirty percent (30%) of Anchorage elementary students are now eligible for free or reduced price lunch.
- Programs providing for special needs students enrolled more than 9,800 students.

- Programs providing for bilingual, migrant, low income, and Native students served more than 12,800 students.

### **Student Achievement on Norm Referenced Tests**

- Norm referenced basic skills test scores continue to exceed the national average. More than 90 percent of Anchorage students tested in grades 3 through 11.
- Overall California Achievement Test scores are similar to those for the prior year with an average Total Battery score at the 64<sup>th</sup> percentile.
  - Total Reading scores range from the 58<sup>th</sup> to 64<sup>th</sup> percentile.
  - Total Language scores range from the 52<sup>nd</sup> to the 70<sup>th</sup> percentile.
  - Total Mathematics scores range from the 61<sup>st</sup> to the 68<sup>th</sup> percentile.
  - Total Battery scores range from the 59<sup>th</sup> to the 69<sup>th</sup> percentile.
- Anchorage has many more high achieving students than low achieving students in reading, language arts and math at every grade tested.
- Scores for minority students continue to remain well below the District average.
- Test scores for students who are eligible for free or reduced priced lunches are lower than the scores of more affluent students.
- Test scores for students who are transient are consistently lower than scores for students who do not move during the school year.
- Scores for students who have some tenure in the District are higher than for students who are in their first or second year in Anchorage.
- Students in schools heavily impacted with poverty and transience have lower scores and lower levels of continuing student growth than schools in more affluent areas with less transience.
- Students did not demonstrate the level of achievement called for in the School Board Goals.

- Between 800 and 1,000 students have CAT reading scores low enough to question their ability to perform as independent readers.
- While students did demonstrate increasing performance in Total Language Arts from grade-to-grade, they did not demonstrate increased success at increasing grade levels in math and spelling.
- Students did not make the goal of a three percentile gain in spelling.

### **Student Achievement on Anchorage Curriculum Referenced Tests**

- Initial efforts to develop the Anchorage Independent Reader assessment have been successful. A definition of the independent reader was completed and a field test of three tests demonstrates a positive relationship between teacher ratings on the "K-3 Reading Benchmarks" and tests. The initial assessment indicates that from 60 percent to 70 percent of district students may be certified as independent readers.
- Student performances on the grade 4 integrated social studies and language arts Jamestown Assessment Unit show substantial student mastery. Map making and writing continue to be areas of concern.
- Results on the new pre-algebra qualification examination show substantial school-to-school differences with from 0 percent to 50 percent of students showing performances strong enough to be recommended for grade 7 pre-algebra. These students will likely be ready for algebra in grade 8.
- Results on the new grade 8 social studies CRT show overall strong performance though results raise some questions about the extent to which law and sociology are covered at some schools.
- Results on the new grade 8 science CRT show overall strong performance in earth and space science, life science, and physics. There is a question raised about the extent to which chemistry is being covered at some schools.
- All students in grades 5, 7, and 10 were included in the Alaska Direct Writing Assessment. Students performed better than in past years and there was a clear pattern of grade to grade increase in the percent of students meeting or exceeding expectations.

### **Student Achievement on College Entrance Exams/Advanced Placement Examinations**

- ACT/SAT scores continue to be strong in 1997-98. A substantial number of graduates took the ACT and SAT.
- ACT and SAT college entrance exam performance is above the national and State of Alaska average in both verbal and mathematics skills.
- SAT Verbal and Math and ACT Language Arts scores are slightly higher than last year and there has been a pattern of growth over the past five years.
- College entrance exam scores are notably higher for those students who have completed a core curriculum of at least four years of English and three or more years in each of mathematics, natural science, and social studies.
- Anchorage students sat for more than 1,500 Advanced Placement Examinations in 1997-98. Better than two-thirds of the results indicated college level mastery of content.

### **Student Achievement on High School Grades and Credits**

- The average secondary student grade in Anchorage is a "B-" with 62 percent of middle school and 57 percent of high school marks earned either "A" or "B."
- Twenty-one credits are currently required for graduation. High school students on the average earned 5.08 credits in 1997-98. The Graduation Support Service and Summer School were instituted during the 1996-97 school year to increase student options in earning and making up credit toward graduation. When ethnic group averages are examined, only the white students average reaches the 21 credits across grades 9-12.
- Approximately one grade in ten earned by high school students is an "F." Mathematics and science courses are the most difficult courses for students. Forty percent of math and science grades are "Ds" and "Fs."

### **Student Attendance and Drop Out Rates**

- Attendance is not a problem for most students in Anchorage. About 93 percent of all students are in school on the average day.
- High School students are absent about six times for each course. There is a strong negative correlation between absences and grades. Average

absences increased by close to one day from 1997 to 1998. The negative relation between absences and grades is a strong one for all students.

- Staff for 1997-98 report a dropout rate just over 3 percent. American Native students are about twice as likely to drop out as the average student.
- Examination of the four year enrollment pattern for the class of 1998, shows that 15 percent may have dropped out over the four years and another 12 percent left school between school years without re-enrolling in Anchorage. These rates are similar to those of last year.

### **Parent, Student, and Staff Attitudes are Positive**

- School Report Card Surveys of parents and students were standardized in 1996-97 to provide cross-district information on issues important to all elementary, middle level and secondary schools. Reports were provided to each school prior to the end-of-year and are available at the individual schools.
- There was a notable decrease in the number of surveys returned by parents and staff members. There were substantial differences in returns between schools. Secondary return rates were low.
- Parents give the District and their local school high marks when compared with the most recent national Phi Delta Kappa Gallop Poll.
- Anchorage parents give both the schools which their children attend and teachers an overall grade of "A-."
- Parent and student attitude was generally positive toward schools and the emphasis given to academics. There has been some improvement in items related to safety and curriculum issues.
- Staff indicate that they are satisfied with their jobs and that they get the support they need from supervisors and co-workers. There is some concern about district curriculum and the implementation of new programs. There is some concern with morale that is most notable at Middle School and High School. There is some concern with the adequacy of students counseling and guidance.