



CHUGACH SCHOOL DISTRICT

Anchorage, Alaska

We built the plane as we were flying it.

—Bob Crumley, Superintendent

THEY SAY NECESSITY IS THE MOTHER OF INVENTION. So, when faced with questions about their learners’ performance; over 70% of learners homeschooled; some schools with just a dozen kids; and a district that reaches over 22,000 square miles of Alaskan wilderness—what could Chugach School District do but step outside of the box and invent something new?

In 1994, the educators, learners, parents, administrators, and community members of Chugach came together to transform their entire education system. Together, they created a new vision for what learning in the Prince William Sound area could look like and got to work. Now known as the first **competency-based**—or performance-based—district in the United States, learners at Chugach move at their own pace—advancing upon their own individual performance rather than in age-based grade cohorts. Guided by both content and process standards, learning is designed to foster kids’ understanding of their own learning processes. This means that learners, even the youngest ones, partner with their teachers to lead and participate in their own educational experience—they are the **agents** of their learning.

One fabulous example of Chugach in action is their Voyage to Excellence School, which welcomes any and all Alaskan learners—whether or not they are part of the Chugach district—to participate in project-based immersion courses lasting anywhere from one week to a month. This opportunity **opens the walls** for kids across the state to pursue and cultivate their own interests: there are construction projects, snow science courses, outdoor leadership experiences, an IT Academy—you dream it, they have it. Responsive to learners’ needs and interests, VTE creates a truly **personalized, relevant, and contextualized** experience, which moves along Alaska State Standards and “uncommon core” standards—fostering life, career, and technical skills.

Throughout its entire journey of transformation, Chugach has kept its communities engaged, involved, and excited. Ownership and trust are major themes in this Alaskan district. Parents, staff, learners, business leaders, and community members all participated in the initial conversations about what outcomes they wanted for their learners and what environments and systems would foster those outcomes. Chugach now has a radical open-door policy that invites community members—regardless of whether they have kids in the system—to join learners for breakfast, spend time in their classrooms, and support learning in any way they can.

Even in its earliest years, the pioneers of Chugach knew this reinvented system was something big—something that needed to be shared. The Chugach Team wrote the *Guide to Reinventing Schools* to share with like-minded schools and districts across the country, providing insight in the process of developing a learner-centered education from designing—refining—and continuously improving the education system to meet the needs of all students. And so, an experiment and vision from the far-away Alaskan cold has made its way across the country—to inspire, invigorate, and transform.

LEARN MORE

[Delivering the Promise: The Education Revolution](#)

[Driven by Student Empowerment: Chugach School District](#)

[How Alaska’s Chugach District Changed Education Through Performance-Based Learning](#)

[Whole-Child Education Delivers Big Gains in Chugach](#)

[Chugach Voyage to Excellence Video](#)



FACTS & FIGURES

Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (2001)

Alaska Performance Excellence (APEX) Award (2009)

Public, PK-12

300 learners served

5 schools

ELL or Primary language other than English: 3.5%

IEP: 7%

Free or reduced lunch:

44% district wide

69% in school buildings

2009 Graduation rates (9-12): 85%

77% Students homeschooled

CONNECT

Websites

[District Website](#)

[FOCUS Homeschool](#)

Facebook Pages

[Chugach School District](#)

[Chenega Bay](#)

[Voyage to Excellence \(VTE\)](#)

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EDUCATION REIMAGINED

