

Department of Education & Early Development

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

333 Willoughby Ave., 9th Floor, SOB
P.O. Box 110500
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0500
Main: 907.465.2800
TTY/TDD: 907.465.2815
Fax: 907.465.2806

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Re: What Parents Should Know About the Alaska Supreme Court Decision on
Correspondence Study Programs

Dear Superintendents and Correspondence School Principals,

I wanted to take a moment to explain the recent Alaska Supreme Court decision and what it means for parents and their children's education through correspondence programs.

Key Points of the Decision:

1. **Continuity and Stability:** The Alaska Supreme Court has restored the correspondence programs as they have been for the past ten years. This means students can continue their education through these programs without any disruptions.
2. **Constitutionality Affirmed:** The court confirmed that the statutes governing correspondence schools are constitutional. This ruling means that the correspondence school allotment program remains in place and can function as it has for the last decade.
3. **Local Control:** Any future legal challenges about how specific allotment funds are spent must be directed at the local school districts that approve these expenditures. This means local school districts remain in control of approving and managing these funds.
4. **Specific Legal Challenges** If anyone challenges a particular use of allotment funds, they must be very specific about what they are challenging. The court will then decide if that specific use is allowed under the law and the constitution.

What This Means for Parents:

- x Their child's correspondence program will continue to operate as it has been, providing the same educational opportunities and support under the correspondence study statutes.
- x The funds they receive for their child's education through the correspondence program can be used, within the guidelines set by their local school district.
- x The ruling provides reassurance that the overall structure of the correspondence programs is sound and backed by the highest court in Alaska.
- x The importance of student's individual learning plans is affirmed since the plan authorizes particular uses of allotment funds to purchase services and materials to support each student's unique needs and goals.

This decision is a positive step for correspondence education in Alaska, ensuring that the programs over 22,000 students rely on will continue to serve their needs effectively.

Feel free to forward this letter to your correspondence families to ensure they understand the court's ruling and its implications.

Warm regards,



Deena M. Bishop, Ed.D.