

Grant Approval Memo



Grantee: Project Grad Kenai Peninsula
Request Amount: \$134,100.00
Project Title: Rural School Counselor Program
Grant Term: 7/1/2026 to 6/30/2027
Fund Source: FY26 Partnerships/Designated Grants
Trust Staff: Samantha Ponts

Requested Motion:

The Program and Planning Committee recommends that the Board of Trustees approve a \$134,100 authority grant to Project Grad Kenai Peninsula for the Rural School Counselor Program. These funds will come from the Partnerships/Designated Grants line of the FY26 budget.

Staff Analysis:

What does this project do?

Trust funds will support one year of salary and associated costs for a full-time, certified school counselor serving K-12 students across four rural communities on the Kenai Peninsula: Tyonek, Nanwalek, Port Graham, and Ninilchik. The counselor will provide culturally responsive, school-based mental health services through a regular rotation scheduling.

Who is receiving the funds?

The grant recipient is Project GRAD Kenai Peninsula (PGKP), a long-standing nonprofit organization that has worked in these communities for over 20 years. PGKP partners closely with the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District, local tribal councils, school administrators, educators, and families to deliver culturally responsive educational and prevention programming in rural communities.

Why is staff recommending this project?

This project directly supports youth who are at risk of becoming Trust beneficiaries due to elevated rates of depression and suicidal ideation. The project increases access to consistent, school-based mental health care in very isolated communities, implements evidence-based prevention strategies shown to reduce suicide risk and strengthen protective factors, improves early identification and intervention for at-risk youth, strengthens school completion, connectedness to caring adults, and family community support systems. This investment aligns with Trust priorities around prevention, early interventions, and youth mental health, particularly in rural areas with limited access to services.

Will this be a multi-year project?

This request is for one-time, one-year of funding. Project GRAD has a sustainability plan and is actively pursuing multi-year federal and educational funding, including a Native Youth Community Projects (NYCP) application and future Alaska Native Education Program (ANEP) funding to continue the position beyond the Trust funding period.

Trust Five Year Funding History

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No previous Trust grants.

Comp Plan Identification

Area of Focus	Objective	Comments
Area of Focus 1: Early Childhood & Youth	1.1 Promote practice-informed comprehensive developmental screening efforts and early intervention services	

Trust Focus Area Connection

Budget Area	Strategy	Comments
Early Childhood & Youth	Early Childhood - Promote practice-informed, universal screening efforts and early intervention services	

Project Description (from grant application)

The Problem

Alaska Native youth consistently struggle when it comes to critical mental health indicators. According to the Alaska Native Health Status Report (2021), in 2019, nearly one in four (24.3%) Alaska Native high school students reported attempting suicide within the past 12 months, a rate substantially higher than the 15.1% reported by Alaska White students. The same report cites depression among Alaska Native high school students reaching 43.1%, compared to 34.2% for Alaska Non-Natives. During the 2016-2019 period, the suicide mortality rate among Alaska Native people (39.9 per 100,000) was nearly double that of Alaska non-Natives (20.3 per 100,000). According to a SAMHSA literature review titled Suicide Clusters Within American Indian and Alaska Native Communities, the highest suicide rates in the nation occurred in Alaska, 42.5 per 100,000.

The rural Alaska Native communities of Tyonek, Nanwalek, Port Graham, and Ninilchik face these mental health challenges with limited resources. Each community houses a K-12 public school. Tyonek, Nanwalek, and Port Graham are accessible only by boat or small plane, while Ninilchik is located on the road system. Currently, 206 students attend these four schools (88 in Ninilchik, 64 in Nanwalek, 30 in Tyonek, and 24 in Port Graham), with 102 students in grades K-6 and 104 in grades 7-12. These Title I schools serve predominantly Alaska Native students in economically disadvantaged communities. Additionally, chronic absenteeism is a persistent challenge, with rates ranging from 41%-87% (Alaska Department of Education and Early Development).

School-based mental health services in these communities are inconsistent. Each school is technically assigned a counselor, however, these counselors serve five or more schools simultaneously and typically visit each village only a few times per year. The Kenai Peninsula Borough School District consistently battles budget constraints that lead to reduced travel support, leaving students without

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predictable mental health support. No school has a full-time counselor, and none have access to a school nurse.

In Nanwalek and Port Graham, Chugachmiut provides community counselors that fly in periodically or work remotely. However, these practitioners do not typically work within the school setting, limiting their access to students during the school day when youth are most readily available for intervention. Ninilchik Tradition Council (NTC) and Southcentral Foundation (serving Tyonek) also employ practitioners, but only NTC provides school office space in Ninilchik. A school-based counselor would complement existing services in all four communities through collaboration and referrals. Counselors familiar with these communities report that mental health incidents and crises are significantly underreported due to the realities of small villages where privacy concerns and stigma prevent disclosure.

SAMHSA's aforementioned review on suicide clusters identifies gaps in rural communities that contribute to elevated suicide risk, including limited access to mental health resources, lack of engaging youth activities, and insufficient community-based prevention strategies. The report emphasizes several protective factors that research has shown reduce suicide risk in AI/AN populations: school completion, strong connections between youth and caring adults, and strengthening family and community support systems. This project aims to address these gaps by providing consistent mental health services and supporting students' academic success and graduation.

What We Will Do

Project GRAD Kenai Peninsula (PGKP) will employ one full-time certified school counselor for one year to provide consistent, culturally responsive mental health services and comprehensive school counseling support to all K-12 students across the four communities of Tyonek, Nanwalek, Port Graham, and Ninilchik.

The counselor's primary focus will be on mental health prevention and intervention, including:

- Implementing evidence-based Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and suicide prevention programming, particularly Sources of Strength curriculum
- Providing individual and group counseling for students experiencing mental health challenges
- Conducting crisis intervention
- Building protective factors and strengthening the web of support around vulnerable youth
- Working collaboratively with teachers, families, tribal councils, and existing community mental health providers

In addition, the counselor will provide essential school counseling functions that support student success and reinforce protective factors:

- Supporting school completion: Helping students stay on track for graduation through academic planning and intervention
- Postsecondary readiness: Assisting students with college applications, FAFSA completion, and exploring alternative pathways including technical programs career training
- Building connections: Connecting students and families with resources for life after high school

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-Addressing barriers: Identifying and addressing barriers to attendance and academic achievement that can contribute to disconnection

The counselor will work on a rotation schedule: traveling weekly to Nanwalek, Port Graham, and Ninilchik, and monthly to Tyonek (weather permitting). This consistent presence will allow the counselor to build trusting relationships with students, identify at-risk youth early, and provide ongoing support rather than crisis-only intervention. The counselor will coordinate with counselors in their respective regions to ensure comprehensive support and appropriate referrals for students needing more intensive services.

The counselor will integrate evidence-based SEL curriculum tailored to developmental stages. For grades K-6, the counselor will deliver Second Step Elementary lessons, an evidence-based SEL curriculum that teaches students skills in emotional management, empathy, problem solving, and self-regulation. Second Step has demonstrated effectiveness in improving social-emotional competence, reducing behavioral problems, and creating positive school climates. For grades 7-12, the counselor will implement Sources of Strength, a nationally recognized, evidence-based program that has demonstrated a 29% reduction in new suicide attempts in participating schools. Sources of Strength has been successfully implemented in tribal and rural communities and uses a strength-based approach focusing on eight protective factors: family support, positive friends, mentors, healthy activities, generosity, spirituality, physical health, and mental health.

Target Population and Geographic Area

This prevention project serves 206 Alaska Native students (grades K-12) and their families across four Alaska Native communities on the Kenai Peninsula: Tyonek (population 291), Nanwalek (population 208), Port Graham (population 125), and Ninilchik (population approximately 1,009). Tyonek, Nanwalek, and Port Graham are accessible only by boat or small plane, while Ninilchik is located on the road system. All four communities face significant barriers to consistent mental health care.

Trust Beneficiaries

This initiative serves Alaska Native youth who are at high risk of becoming Trust beneficiaries. By providing consistent counseling and evidence-based suicide prevention programming, this project will help prevent vulnerable Alaska Native youth from developing mental illness, substance abuse disorders, and suicidal behaviors. Research demonstrates that early intervention during childhood and adolescence is crucial to alleviate the impact of early stress and encourage self-regulatory functioning. Additionally, by supporting school completion and other protective factors, this project addresses elements that research has shown reduce suicide risk.

Expected Outcomes

By the end of the one-year project period, we expect:

- All students will have access to a consistent, on-site school counselor on a regular rotation basis
- Students will receive direct instruction in evidence-based SEL and protective factors through classroom lessons
- Increased student perceptions that adults at school help suicidal youth

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- Increased help-seeking behaviors among students
- Improved connectedness between students and caring adults
- Reduced codes of silence around mental health and suicide
- Early identification and intervention for at-risk youth before crisis occurs
- Measurable improvement in student social-emotional wellbeing as assessed through pre/post surveys
- Enhanced coordination with existing mental health resources

Long-Term Outcomes (with sustained funding):

If this position continues beyond the 26/27 school year, we anticipate:

- Increased graduation rates as students receive consistent academic planning and support
- Increased postsecondary enrollment and completion of FAFSA/college applications
- Reduced suicide attempts and mental health crises
- Improved chronic absenteeism rates as underlying barriers are identified and addressed
- Stronger school-family-community partnerships around youth mental health
- Measurable reduction in risk behaviors (substance use, self-harm) as reported in Youth Risk Behavior Survey data

Community Support

This project has strong community support from multiple stakeholders. PGKP has worked in these communities for over 20 years and has cultivated deep partnerships with the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District, local tribal councils, school principals, teachers, and families. Through this longstanding work, we have earned the trust of community leaders, educators, and youth. We will be submitting letters of support from all four school principals. Tribal councils in these communities have also expressed the urgent need for services like those proposed in this project.

Project GRAD's current POWER UP initiative, funded through the Alaska Native Education Program, has surpassed all established goals, delivering 5,671 academic and SEL sessions totaling 10,756 hours of service to 269 participants in the 2024-25 school year. Our reputation for delivering culturally relevant programming positions us well to successfully implement this mental health prevention project.

Performance Measures

How much did you do?

- a. Total number (#) of students served during the reporting period across all four schools and broken down by the number (#) of students served at each school.
- b. Number (#) of individual counseling sessions provided during the grant reporting period, in total (across all four schools) and number (#) of sessions at each school.
- c. Number (#) of small group counseling sessions provided during the grant reporting period, in total (across all four schools) and number (#) of sessions at each school.

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- d. Number (#) of post-secondary counseling sessions held during the grant reporting period, broken down by number (#) of individual sessions and the number (#) of group sessions. For the group sessions, please list the topics discussed during each session.
- e. Number (#) of classroom lessons delivered during the grant reporting period, broken down by school location, age/grade, and topic.
- f. Number (#) of crisis interventions conducted during the grant reporting period.
- g. Number (#) of external referrals made to mental health services during the grant reporting period.

How well did you do it?

- a. Provide a narrative describing the timeline, activities, successes, challenges, and any lessons learned during the reporting period. Additionally, provide information on the travel schedule to each community (frequency and duration of each trip).
- b. Number (#) and percentage (%) of students who increased their knowledge on topics discussed during the school visits and/or classroom sessions based on a pre-/post-survey of participants.
- c. Number (#) and percentage (%) of students who can identify two or more trusted adults or resources in their school/community by the end of the grant reporting period.
- d. Number (#) and percentage (%) of students who increased their willingness to seek help for mental health concerns (for either themselves or a friend) from baseline to follow-up.

Is anyone better off?

- a. Provide a synopsis of pre-/post-data collected on student participant improvements and changes in help-seeking behaviors, social-emotional well-being (emotional regulation, social connection, coping skills), school attendance, and disciplinary incidents.
- b. Provide four statements from participants that describe how the programming and/or counseling they received as part of the project impacted their quality of life.

Sustainability (from grant application)

Project GRAD is committed to sustaining this position beyond the one-year funding period provided by the Alaska Mental Health Trust. We have developed a plan that leverages our strong track record of securing federal funding and our partnerships with tribal communities.

We are currently working on a Native Youth Community Projects (NYCP) grant application that will include a school counseling position serving these same four communities. If funded, this would be a three-year project with the possibility of extending to five years, providing long term support for mental health services in Tyonek, Nanwalek, Port Graham, and Ninilchik.

Additionally, we plan to apply for Alaska Native Education Program (ANEP) funding when the next competition is released, anticipated in FY27. Project GRAD has had significant success with ANEP funding over the past decade, and we will include one, or possibly two counseling positions in our next ANEP application. Given that counseling is integral to our mission of increasing graduation rates and supporting student success in rural Alaska Native communities, these positions will be core components of future ANEP proposals.

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Beyond grant applications, we are in active discussions with tribal councils in all four communities about sustaining these services. Our years of partnership have built trust and demonstrated our commitment to these communities. Tribal leaders have expressed strong support for mental health services and recognize the critical need for consistent counseling support. We are exploring pathways for sustaining services through tribal partnerships, particularly if federal funding opportunities are delayed or limited.

Project GRAD has successfully sustained programming in these communities for over 20 years. Our organization has secured over \$16 million in federal and state funding since 2015, demonstrating our capacity to maintain and grow services. The one-year Alaska Mental Health Trust funding will allow us to continue this vital service, demonstrate its impact, and build the case for continued funding through federal programs that support Alaska Native youth development and education.

Who We Serve (from grant application)

This is a prevention project designed to prevent youth in these rural communities from becoming Alaska Mental Health Trust beneficiaries. Alaska Native youth, the primary target population of this program, consistently report higher rates of depression, suicide attempts, and substance use.

By providing consistent counseling services to these remote schools, we expect some of the following benefits.

- Preventing mental illness: Early identification and intervention for students showing signs of depression, anxiety, and other mental health concerns before they develop into chronic conditions
- Preventing substance abuse disorders: Building protective factors and healthy coping skills that reduce the likelihood of youth turning to alcohol and drugs to manage stress
- Preventing suicide and self-harm: Implementing evidence-based curriculum to change norms around help-seeking and increase connections to supportive adults
- Building resilience: Strengthening protective factors (family support, positive friends, mentors, healthy activities, generosity, spirituality, physical health, mental health) that research shows reduce risk for Trust beneficiary conditions

Research consistently shows that upstream intervention is the most effective time to intervene, providing students with the necessary skills to build a healthy lifestyle, rather than tackling conditions after they emerge. This project aims to serve youth before they become Trust beneficiaries, hopefully relieving some of the long-term stress put on mental health resources in our state.

Estimated Numbers of Beneficiaries Served Experiencing (from grant application)

Mental Illness:	50
Number of people to be trained	1

Project Budget (from grant application)

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Personnel Services Costs	\$99,050.00
Personnel Services Costs (Other Sources)	\$0.00
Personnel Services Narrative	<p>K-12 School Counselor (1.0 FTE): \$70,000 for 10 month contract</p> <p>Project Director (0.1 FTE): \$9,240/year for 1 year</p> <p>Payroll Taxes & Benefits: \$19,810 (25% of salaries and wages)</p>
Travel Costs	\$25,245.00
Travel Costs (Other Sources)	\$0.00
Travel Costs Narrative	<p>Counselor Programming Travel: (\$25,245)</p> <p>-Flights to Nanwalek and Port Graham: 2 round trips (RT)/week X \$200 per RT X 39 weeks/year = \$15,600</p> <p>-Trips to Tyonek: 8 RT/year X \$957/RT = \$7,656</p> <p>Mileage Reimbursement for Ninilchik: 1 RT/week X \$51/RT X 39 weeks/year = \$1,989</p>
Space or Facilities Costs	\$2,970.00
Space or Facilities Costs (Other Sources)	\$16,830.00
Space or Facilities Narrative	Rent: 15% of rent costs (\$2,970), other 85% of rent will be in-kind
Supplies Costs	\$1,000.00
Supplies Costs (Other Sources)	\$1,000.00
Supplies Narrative	<p>General Office Supplies: \$500</p> <p>Programming Materials: \$500</p> <p>Curriculum and Office Supplies Already Purchased: \$4,000</p>
Other Costs	\$5,835.00
Other Costs (Other Sources)	\$11,352.00
Other Costs Narrative	<p>Costs at 15% Grant Request and 85% In-Kind:</p> <p>Utilities/Subscriptions: \$2,155 from Trust + \$11,362 in-kind</p> <p>Sources of Strength Licensing Fee: \$750</p> <p>Bookkeeping: \$1,680</p> <p>Sources of Strength Training Fee: \$1,250</p>

Other Funding Sources (from grant application)

Project GRAD Kenai Peninsula (SECURED)	\$32,182.00
Total Leveraged Funds	\$32,182.00

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT
Between
Kenai Peninsula Borough School District
148 North Binkley
Soldotna, AK 99669
And
Project GRAD Kenai Peninsula
PO Box 1725, Homer, AK 99603
1340 East Road, Homer, AK 99603

Rural School Counseling Program

Term of MOA: July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026 pending grant award.

The purpose of this agreement is to work collaboratively with consortium partners who meet the educational needs of students in the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District and to meet the goals and objectives of the Alaska Mental Health Trust grant proposal.

This agreement will establish coordination and responsibilities for a grant funded counseling position that will be employed and managed by Project GRAD Kenai Peninsula. This agreement establishes roles and responsibilities for each organization.

PGKP will collaborate with KPBSD schools (Nanwalek, Ninilchik, Port Graham and Tebughna Schools) to focus on improving social emotional learning, academic achievement, graduation rates, and career/college/postsecondary access for students in grades K-12 in participating K-12 schools. Programming will include culturally responsive supports for academic achievement, social-emotional learning, career/college access, and positive youth development opportunities.

PGKP will provide an on-site counselor in Nanwalek, Ninilchik, Port Graham, and Tebughna Schools. This counselor will address social emotional learning (SEL), well-being, healthy choices, as well as provide student case management and support, and support postsecondary access through scholarship and enrollment assistance. Services will be provided to the identified school's students and parents to help remove barriers to student success, build confidence, raise expectations, value culture and community, and increase motivation to achieve and remain in school. PGKP staff will assist in data collection/analysis for accurate progress monitoring and program quality evaluations.

Roles and Responsibilities of Project GRAD Kenai Peninsula (PGKP) and staff

- 1) Project GRAD Kenai Peninsula shall defend, indemnify, and hold harmless KPBSD for any claims, causes, action, or liability resulting from the negligence or other acts of "party name" or its employees arising from or relating to the performance of services under this agreement.

Carry liability insurance for staff

- a. Comprehensive general liability insurance in the minimum amount of \$1,000,000 combined single limit bodily injury and property damage per occurrence. The district shall be named as an additional insured on such policy with respect to the performance or failure to perform under this contract.
- b. Commercial general/automobile liability insurance shall not be less than \$1,000,000 combined single limit bodily injury and property damage per occurrence.
- c. Worker's Compensation and employer's liability insurance shall be provided for all employees per Alaska State Statutes who are performing work under this agreement.

- d. Certificate(s) of insurance shall not be cancelled or material change of the insurance coverage during the period of the agreement.

Alaska Unemployment Insurance

- i. The term "Contractor" as used below means the organization other than the KPSB that is a party to this MOA.

Pursuant to 8 ACC 85.015, the State of Alaska considers Contractor's employees to be KPSB employees for purposes of Alaska Unemployment Insurance ("UI") only. KPSB and Contractor covenant and agree that Contractor's employees are not KPSB employees. However, solely to comply with Alaska law, KPSB shall report Contractor's employees as KPSB employees to the state as required by law.

Contractor agrees to provide KPSB with the following information regarding Contractor's employees who KPSB shall report for UI purpose: employees' social security numbers, names, reportable wages paid each quarter, full occupational titles or codes, geographic codes, and any and all other information needed for KPSB to comply with State of Alaska reporting requirements for employment compensation. Contractor shall deliver such information to KPSB no later than the 10th day of April, July, October and January for each preceding quarter by email addressed to Faith Link at flink@kpsb.k12.ak.us with a copy mailed to Payroll Dept., KPSB, 148 N. Binkley, Soldotna, AK 99669. Contractor acknowledges that KPSB uses the reimbursement payment method instead of purchasing unemployment insurance for its employees, which means it carries no insurance to pay any unemployment claims. Contractor agrees that it will promptly pay any and all claims and associated costs for unemployment benefits filed by its employees who are reported by KPSB for UI pursuant to this agreement, and it will indemnify, defend and hold harmless KPSB against any and all such claims and associated costs.

- 2) Responsible for the hiring and termination of program staff.
 - a. Negative TB test (once) for all persons working with students
 - b. Have a background check performed by signing up through the KPSB website as MOA/Outside Agency, including acknowledgement of BP & AR 4112.5 Security Check, BP 6161.4 Acceptable Use Policy/Internet Safety Policy, Confidentiality Statement using the following link:
<https://www.applitrack.com/kpsb/onlineapp/default.aspx>
 - c. Read, sign and comply with Acceptable Use Policy/Internet Safety Policy BP
<https://kpsb.org/board.aspx?id=2778&transitionUi=1> and corresponding AR 6161.4
<https://kpsb.org/board.aspx?id=2780&transitionUi=1>
 - d. Read, sign and comply with security of Student Records BP 5125
<https://kpsb.org/board.aspx?id=3270&transitionUi=1> and AR 5125
<https://kpsb.org/board.aspx?id=3276&transitionUi=1>
 - e. If district facilities will be used BP 1330 Use of School Facilities and Properties
<https://kpsb.org/board.aspx?id=2838&transitionUi=1> and AR 1330
<https://kpsb.org/board.aspx?id=2844&transitionUi=1> must be complied with.
 - i. A Room/Building Use Application E1330(a)
<http://www.kpsb.k12.ak.us/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=33491> must be completed.

ii. The certificate of liability insurance must indicate the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District as additional insured.

AS 14.30.143 Concussion Requirements:

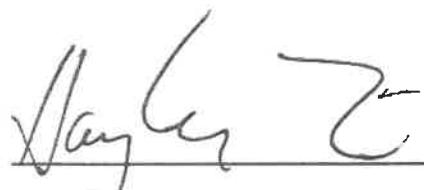
- Is this building/facility usage related to a nonprofit youth organization providing an opportunity to participate in sports or other recreational activities that could result in a concussion? Yes, No
If so, has the organization provided the District written verification of
 - o (A) A valid insurance policy covering the injury or death in an amount not less than \$50,000 for each person and \$100,000 for each incident;
 - o (B) Compliance with the protocol for prevention and reporting of concussions required in AS 14.30.142 (BP, AR and E 6145.22)
- 3) Involve building administrators in the selection of program staff
 - a. Work with building administrators to monitor activities and progress. Follow all school rules as requested by the building administrator
 - b. Collaborate with the building administrator and teachers to coordinate professional development opportunities for staff
- 4) Evaluate program staff seeking input from building administrators.
- 5) Manage financial needs relating to salary and supplies for program staff
- 6) Maintain financial records relating to this grant program including payroll reports and provide monthly payroll checks for program staff.
- 7) Carry General Liability Insurance which covers program staff working in KPSB schools
- 8) Submit required program evaluation reports to the state government as required under the terms of the grant
- 9) Conduct annual audits of the organization
- 10) Comply with state and federal rules and regulations that pertain to the implementation of the ANEP grant.
 - a) Oversee the implementation of program and keep records of all activities carried out as part of the ANEP grant
- 11) Carry out the activities of this program as written in the grant and included in the budget documents
 - a) Any transportation of students will require compliance with appropriate policies surrounding transportation of students.
 - i) School-Sponsored Trips BP 6153 <https://kpbsd.org/board.aspx?id=2744&transitionUi=1> and AR 6153 <https://kpbsd.org/board.aspx?id=2746&transitionUi=1>
 - ii)
 - (1) E 6153(f) Student Indemnification Statement/Medical Consent/Consent to Participate/Behavior Contract
<http://www.kpbsd.k12.ak.us/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=23639&libID=2364>
2
 - (2) E 6153(h) Volunteer Indemnification Statement/Alcohol Drug-Free Statement
<http://www.kpbsd.k12.ak.us/WorkArea/linkit.aspx?LinkIdentifier=id&ItemID=19452&libID=1947>
4
 - iii) School Related Trips BP 3541.1<https://kpbsd.org/board.aspx?id=3094&transitionUi=1> and AR 3541.1 <https://kpbsd.org/board.aspx?id=3102&transitionUi=1>
 - iv) E 3541.1(a) Driver Registration Form
<http://www.kpbsd.k12.ak.us/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=3080>
 - v) E 3541.1(b) Private Vehicle Transport Safety Check
<http://www.kpbsd.k12.ak.us/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=3082>
- 12) Project GRAD will utilize kitchen facilities for meal service programs and will accept responsibility for any damage caused by Project Grad employees.
- 13) Support students in maintaining academic achievement
- 14) Adhere to FERPA (Family Education Right to Privacy Act)

- 15) Coordinate with building administrators to minimize removal of students from instruction
- 16) Allow a minimum of 30 minutes daily for record keeping and reporting
- 17) Document parent interactions
- 18) Refer parents to other community services and KPBSD support programs as appropriate

Roles and Responsibilities of the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District (KPBSD)

- KPBSD's Assistant Superintendent will communicate regularly with PGKP Executive Director or Program Manager to monitor program implementation and address any problems that may arise.
- KPBSD building administrators will honor the terms of this Memorandum of Agreement.
- Building administrators will assist in the selection of program staff for their respective buildings.
- Building administrators and teaching staff will provide supervision and directions for PGKP staff to optimize scheduling for the benefit of students in the building.
- Building administrators will keep PGKP Executive Director or Program Administrator informed of program strengths and weaknesses providing immediate notification of problems.
- Building administrators and/or teaching staff will assist PGKP staff in the securing of parent permission whenever necessary.
- Building administrators will provide PGKP Executive Director or Program Administrator with information regarding the quality of services provided by PGKP staff when requested.
- Building administrators and/or teaching staff will direct PGKP staff to work with students and their families who are in need of academic support.
- Building administrators and/or teaching staff will provide direction and planning support for PGKP staff so that they can effectively assist targeted students.
- Building administrators and/or teaching staff will ensure PGKP personnel have appropriate space to work for completing paperwork and parent communications.
- KPBSD will provide a guest computer account allowing specific named users the ability to login to KPBSD-owned computers connected to the KPBSD internal network. This guest account allows for computer login and storage folders ("Documents" / "Desktop"). Additionally, an email account will be associated with the guest computer account. Use of guest account and KPBSD email is governed by Board Policy 6161.4 Acceptable Use Policy/Internet Safety Policy. Wireless network access is available to guest accounts via the "KPBSD Guest" or "KPBSD Staff/Student" networks. In the event this agreement spans multiple years, guest computer accounts supplied under this agreement will expire on June 30th of each year. Account renewal must be requested through KPBSD Information Services yearly by supplying a list of then-current named users requiring guest computer accounts.
- Backups of electronic computer data remain the responsibility of the person(s) or organization named under this agreement. Use of the KPBSD computer and network system is governed by Board Policy 6161.4 Acceptable Use Policy/Internet Safety Policy, available at <https://kpbsd.org/board.aspx?id=2778&transitionUi=1>
- Building administrators will orientate PGKP staff to school practices and procedures so that PGKP staff can smoothly work within the school environment. (to include FERPA guidelines)
- Building administrators and teaching staff will assist in program monitoring and provide recommendations to PGKP Executive Director or Program Administrator for program planning and improvement.
- KPBSD's Assistant Superintendent will assist PGKP Executive Director or Program Administrator in securing data needed for program evaluation and securing additional funds for program continuation
- KPBSD will provide Project GRAD Kenai Peninsula support documentation to submit timely reporting to the granting agency as determined by the respective accounting departments
- Building administrators have the right to prohibit PGKP staff from working in their respective buildings upon written justification and reasonable notice for such action.

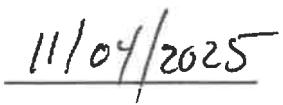
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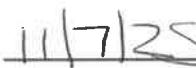
Hayley Norris, Executive Director
Project GRAD Kenai Peninsula



Kari Dendurant, Assistant Superintendent
Kenai Peninsula Borough School District



Date



Date



Port Graham School
PO Box 5550
Port Graham, Alaska 99603
P:(907)284-2210
F:(907)284-2213



SAFE, RESPECTFUL, RESPONSIBLE

September 15, 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

This letter comes in support of Project GRAD Kenai Peninsula's proposal to the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority to provide a qualified Social Counselor to the K-12 students at Port Graham School.

In my dual role as principal and teacher at Port Graham School, I have witnessed firsthand the positive impact Project GRAD has had on our youth across the region and within our district. Project GRAD staff have consistently demonstrated the professional capacity, experience, and enthusiasm to strengthen programs that support our students' success. Building upon years of culturally responsive programming, I believe Project GRAD is well-positioned to deliver a counseling program that will meet the unique needs of our community.

Alaska Native students in rural villages often face additional barriers to accessing counseling and other supportive services. Statewide data makes clear that these disparities in mental health access persist. The presence of a trained counselor would significantly reduce the likelihood of student isolation and risky behaviors by ensuring that each child has access to a trusted and caring adult. At present, we do not have access to a full-time school counselor, and this resource would provide critical support in addressing the social, emotional, and academic barriers our youth face.

Project GRAD's strength-based approach draws upon the creativity, resilience, and cultural power inherent in our youth, empowering them to move forward with confidence and connection to their community. I am confident that Project GRAD's track record in leadership, academics, and social-emotional learning has prepared them to deliver a robust and effective counseling program for our students.

Given the financial challenges our schools are facing, resources like this are essential for helping our students build resilience and thrive. Having another scheduled and consistent counselor will strengthen the safe and focused school environment that allows our youth to make healthy, life-impacting decisions rooted in compassion and respect.

We look forward to working together on this important initiative. If you require any additional information about Project GRAD or the needs of our students, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Loana Benton
Principal/Teacher, Port Graham School



To Whom It May Concern,

This letter comes in support of Project GRAD Kenai Peninsula's proposal to the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority to provide a qualified Social Counselor to the K-12 students at Tebughna School.

As the Native Village of Tyonek, we have witnessed firsthand the positive impact Project GRAD has had on our youth across the region and within our district. GRAD staff have consistently demonstrated the professional capacity, experience, and enthusiasm to strengthen programs that support our students' success. Building upon years of culturally responsive programming, we believe Project GRAD is well-positioned to deliver a counseling program that will meet the unique needs of our community.

As you are aware, Alaska Native students in rural villages often face additional barriers to accessing counseling and other supportive services. Statewide data makes clear that these disparities in mental health access persist. The presence of a trained counselor would significantly reduce the likelihood of student isolation and risky behaviors by ensuring that each child has access to a trusted and caring adult. At present, we do not have access to a full-time school counselor, and this resource would provide critical support in addressing the social, emotional, and academic barriers our youth face.

Project GRAD's strength-based approach draws upon the creativity, resilience, and cultural power inherent in our youth, empowering them to move forward with confidence and connection to their community. I am confident that Project GRAD's track record in leadership, academics, and social-emotional learning has prepared them to deliver a robust and effective counseling program for our students.

Given the financial challenges our schools are facing, resources like this are essential for helping our students build resilience and thrive. Having another scheduled and consistent counselor will strengthen the safe and focused school environment that allows our youth to make healthy, life-impacting decisions rooted in compassion and respect.

We look forward to working together on this important initiative. If you require any additional information about Project GRAD or the needs of our students, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,


Robert Stephan
Native Village of Tyonek
Council President



To Whom it May Concern;

I am writing in support of Project GRAD Kenai Peninsula's proposal to the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority to provide a qualified Social Counselor to K-12 students at Nanwalek School.

Project GRAD has worked with youth in our region and district, and their staff has shown the professional capacity and experience needed to support student programs. Given their background in culturally responsive programming, they are suited to deliver a counseling program for our community.

Alaska Native students in rural villages face barriers to accessing counseling and supportive services, and statewide data reflects these disparities in mental health access. A trained counselor would help reduce student isolation and risky behaviors by ensuring students have access to a caring adult. Currently, we do not have a full-time school counselor, and this resource would address social, emotional, and academic barriers our students face.

Our need for counseling support is significant. Our students have experienced considerable trauma, including a plane crash and the loss of staff members they were close to. Many students are living with relatives or in foster placements. The presence of a consistent counselor would provide critical support for these children as they navigate these challenges.

Project GRAD uses a strength-based approach that draws on the resilience and cultural identity of our youth. Their experience in leadership, academics, and social-emotional learning supports their ability to deliver an effective counseling program. With the financial challenges our schools are facing, resources like this are important for helping students build resilience. An additional consistent counselor will contribute to a safe school environment where students can make healthy decisions.

Please contact me if you need any additional information about Project GRAD or the needs of our students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Penny Bearden-Brown". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "P" at the beginning.

Penny Bearden-Brown
Nanwalek School Principal

To Whom It May Concern,

This letter comes in support of Project GRAD Kenai Peninsula's proposal to the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority to provide a qualified Social Counselor to the K-12 students at Ninilchik School.

As principal, have witnessed firsthand the positive impact Project GRAD has had on our youth across the region and within our district. GRAD staff have consistently demonstrated the professional capacity, experience, and enthusiasm to strengthen programs that support our students' success. Building upon years of culturally responsive programming, I believe Project GRAD is well-positioned to deliver a counseling program that will meet the unique needs of our community.

As you are aware, Alaska Native students in rural villages often face additional barriers to accessing counseling and other supportive services. Statewide data makes clear that these disparities in mental health access persist. The presence of a trained counselor would significantly reduce the likelihood of student isolation and risky behaviors by ensuring that each child has access to a trusted and caring adult. At present, we do not have access to a full-time school counselor, and this resource would provide critical support in addressing the social, emotional, and academic barriers our youth face.

Project GRAD's strength-based approach draws upon the creativity, resilience, and cultural power inherent in our youth, empowering them to move forward with confidence and connection to their community. I am confident that Project GRAD's track record in leadership, academics, and social-emotional learning has prepared them to deliver a robust and effective counseling program for our students.

Given the financial challenges our schools are facing, resources like this are essential for helping our students build resilience and thrive. Having another scheduled and consistent counselor will strengthen the safe and focused school environment that allows our youth to make healthy, life-impacting decisions rooted in compassion and respect.

We look forward to working together on this important initiative. If you require any additional information about Project GRAD or the needs of our students, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



Sheri Maynard

Ninilchik School



Tebughna Elementary/High School

PO Box 82010
Tyonek, AK 99682
Ph.: (907) 583-2291/Fax: (907) 583-2692
Principal Christy Gomez



To Whom It May Concern,

This letter comes in support of Project GRAD Kenai Peninsula's proposal to the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority to provide a qualified Social Counselor to the K-12 students at Tebughna School.

At Tebughna School's Principal/ Teacher, I have witnessed firsthand the positive impact Project GRAD has had on our youth across the region and within our district. GRAD staff has consistently demonstrated the professional capacity, experience, and enthusiasm to strengthen programs that support our students' success. Building upon years of culturally responsive programming, I believe Project GRAD is well-positioned to deliver a counseling program that will meet the unique needs of our community.

As you are aware, Alaska Native students in rural villages often face additional barriers to accessing counseling and other supportive services. Statewide data makes clear that these disparities in mental health access persist. The presence of a trained counselor would significantly reduce the likelihood of student isolation and risky behaviors by ensuring that each child has access to a trusted and caring adult. At present, we do not have access to a full-time school counselor, and this resource would provide critical support in addressing the social, emotional, and academic barriers our youth face.

Project GRAD's strength-based approach draws upon the creativity, resilience, and cultural power inherent in our youth, empowering them to move forward with confidence and connection to their community. I am confident that Project GRAD's track record in leadership, academics, and social-emotional learning has prepared them to deliver a robust and effective counseling program for our students.

Given the financial challenges our schools are facing, resources like this are essential for helping our students build resilience and thrive. Having another scheduled and consistent counselor will strengthen the safe and focused school environment that allows our youth to make healthy, life-impacting decisions rooted in compassion and respect.

We look forward to working together on this important initiative. If you require any additional information about Project GRAD or the needs of our students, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Christy Gomez, Principal/ Teacher