

# Broadening the Options of Rural Students in Glennallen, AK

Copper River School District



**Tammy Van Wyhe,**  
Director of Teaching &  
Learning Support



**100 students**  
Grades 9 to 12



**EdOptions Academy**



**Rural school district**  
**46% Caucasian**  
**41% Native Alaskan**  
**13% other**

## The Challenge:

Surrounded by mountains, rivers and forest, the Copper River School District (CRSD) is charged with educating a rural area's student population that only numbers 100 students in grades 9-12. School districts of that size can usually only justify offering the minimum amount of courses needed to meet the state's graduation requirements. Differentiation can be nearly impossible.

However, in order to ensure the future employment and college success of rural students, more course options should be provided. Those options should include courses that would fall under career and technical education (CTE), as well as other curricula that lead straight into careers.

"As a small, rural district, we have very few course options for high school students," said CRSD director of teaching and learning support, Tammy Van Wyhe. "We needed a way to provide students with plenty of options in core classes, advanced coursework, special interest elective topics, and CTE-aligned preparatory classes. EdOptions Academy provided an impressive array of high-interest, high-quality courses taught by outstanding teachers, allowing us to provide options for students that there is no way we could have offered on our own."

**Small, rural schools and districts often do not have the means to offer their students anything other than the basic courses. In Alaska, students often need many more options in order to find a career or college. With EdOptions Academy, Copper River School District is able to offer more than 250 different courses in a high school population of only 100 students.**

## How They Did It:

When considering a blended, online learning strategy to meet the varying, unique needs of its students, Van Wyhe and the staff at CRSD had an extensive wish list: expand learning opportunities for students, provide access to Advanced Placement® coursework, provide

access to CTE-aligned studies, allow students access to special interest courses, even if they were the only ones desiring to take a given course, and lastly, allow students to progress at their own pace, especially for those desiring accelerated pathways.

Students choose from a list of more than 250 courses, most of which are powered by EdOptions Academy. The district has learning labs scattered throughout the area, each of which is staffed by a dedicated mentor and can serve up to 20 students at a time.

“For example, we may have 10 students working in an e-learning lab at the same time (with one mentor), and all 10 students can be taking different classes,” exclaimed Van Wyhe. “That’s powerful, and the fact that we are able to address so many different needs, types of learners, interests, etc., is tremendously exciting and rewarding.”

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### **Success:**

Providing more options for students using the flexibility of online learning can have considerable effects on the community. More skilled workers are available. Fewer students drop out due to the school not serving their interests. CRSD is seeing the benefits firsthand.

“Our extremely rural location, small size, and diverse student population mean that students have both divergent interests and academic needs, while lacking access to a variety of high quality, rigorous courses,” said Van Wyhe. “EdOptions Academy courses have allowed us to provide curricular options that are ‘just right’ for our diverse array of learners.”

Van Wyhe also finds it hard to remember what the district was like before adopting an online strategy: “Before online course availability, our students had access to only the bare basics in terms of courses. Our master schedule did not include a single AP® class, only one or two science and/or social studies classes each year, and bare-bones ELA classes. Elective offerings were limited to physical education, music, and a couple of CTE/shop classes. Students who desired advanced studies, CTE-focused electives, and more specific core content classes were out of luck. . . . We went from no students having online opportunities just four years ago to between 25 and 50 students taking at least one online class per semester.”

Those up-to-50 students make up half of the high-school-age population in the Copper River School District, showing just how in-demand its diverse course catalog has become.



**EdOptions Academy courses have allowed us to provide curricular options that are ‘just right’ for our diverse array of learners.**



**Tammy Van Wyhe,  
Director of Teaching & Learning Support**

**The Future:**

**For more information:**

Contact [800.447.5286](tel:800.447.5286) or visit [www.edmentum.com](http://www.edmentum.com) to learn more about Edmentum's online learning solutions.