Peterson, Chiniak Schools Recieve State Honors

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

Two Kodiak schools were recently recognized as some of the highest performing public schools in the state.

“Peterson Elementary and Chiniak School are both highest performing schools in their category and then Chiniak School is also a high progress school.”

That’s Eric Fry, a spokesman for the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development. Fry said the recognition comes from the Alaska School Performance Index.

“It’s a new designation based on the state’s new accountability system for schools under a waiver from No Child Left Behind we were able to create our own accountability system, replacing the old adequate yearly progress which was widely unpopular with parents and educators.”

Fry said one of the nice things about the new system is the ability to recognize both the highest performing schools, as well as the schools that are showing a lot of progress and growth.

Each year the new system will evaluate schools in three different grade systems: K-8, 9-12 and K-12. He said that means small schools in remote villages have just as good of a chance of being recognized as urban high schools.

“So just to try to put it very briefly, highest performing are basically schools in each of those grade spans that are in the top 10 percent of schools in that grade span. And when we mean top 10 percent, we have a bit of a formula, it’s a bit complex, but it comes down to taking a look at how students do on the state’s reading, writing and math tests, and then how well the school is improving over time, looking at the student body as a whole. And then attendance rate. And then if a school has high school students we look at graduation rate and how those students are doing on any college entrance exams they may choose to take like the SATs or the ACTs and how they do on a work ready test that the state requires for 11th graders.”

The highest progress schools refer to those that are in the highest 10 percent in their category for an index that shows academic growth of the students from year to year.

“We look at the same students who are in a school for two years in a row and we assign points to a school based on whether the student is going up or down or staying the same on the state assessments in reading, writing and math. And you add all those numbers together and divide by the number of kids you’re talking about and you get a general sense of how a school is doing. And an important point of the school progress is that not only are we looking at the student body as a whole, but to win this award you have to show good progress among various sub groups, such as Alaska Native students, students from low income families, students with disabilities

and students who are known as English language learners, meaning they are struggling with English.”

He said both categories are high honors, and a total of 51 schools were recognized this year. Fry said 31 schools were named highest performing and 37 were highest progress with 19 earning both recognitions. He said there are roughly 500 schools across the state.