

Enrollment Discussed at Port Lions Meeting

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Erik Wander/KMXT

The Kodiak Island Borough School District has seen a significant decline in enrollment numbers during the 2008/2009 school year. The Board of Education discussed possible staffing adjustments, based on current and projected 2009/2010 enrollment for K-through-12 schools at its work session Monday. The work session was held in an appropriate alternate location for such a topic, the Port Lions School.

Superintendent Stewart McDonald described the process of making enrollment and staffing determinations as a sort of tour of all the rural schools, having a series of meetings with members of the various communities.

-- (Rural 1 26 sec. "We're going to each ... any given year.")

McDonald pointed to the Akhiok School as an example of a one in which enrollment has actually increased. He said that while Akhiok has hovered at around 10 or 11 students in recent years, they're up to 19 students enrolled this year. At the beginning of the School Board's meeting students and faculty at the Karluk School, which recently re-opened, gave a presentation.

-- (Rural 2 14 sec. "There is evidence that ... that presentation mode now.")

McDonald said that staffing needs have changed over time as the district's assessment of student needs has changed.

-- (Rural 3 38 sec. "We've been trying to ... what academics can be offered.")

Regardless of staffing decisions from school to school, McDonald said there will also be greater interaction and sharing of

information and training among Kodiak High School and rural teachers, a process that has already been set in motion.

-- (Rural 4 12 sec. "No matter what our ... it's already set up.")

Prior to the meeting, some members of the Port Lions Advisory School Board expressed their concerns to McDonald regarding the future of the Port Lions School. According to Port Lions principal Kendra Bartz, 32 students are currently enrolled at the school. However, with three students graduating this year and only one current kindergartner, that number may well drop to 29 next year, which could result in the principal's position being eliminated. One member of the ASB questioned McDonald about the process of re-opening a rural school once it has been closed. McDonald said that the district's policy is that if 10 students are enrolled and there is a school building in a given location, they will run a school. However, this can be complicated by funding cycles and the time it takes to make a building functional again.

-- (Rural 5 38 sec. "The actual funding ... we will provide the school.")

McDonald plans to meet with the Port Lions Advisory School Board and other concerned members of the community to discuss their specific concerns on May 13th in Port Lions. He also plans to hold a similar meeting in Ouzinkie shortly thereafter. He said he expects a list of staffing needs and courses to be offered to be completed by the second week in June.

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