

I was raised in a small, Alaskan community within the Copper River Valley, which is a place many would say offers very little educational opportunity- opportunities to achieve, to learn, and to prepare for life after school. However, my education in rural Alaska has developed within me an adaptability that has permitted me to seize my education and make it my own. In turn, my time in the Copper River School District has defined me as a person who can achieve anything with determination and an open mind.

My experience throughout elementary and middle school was typical of most students my age, but with one exception: since I went to a small school, I was able to further challenge myself by going to other classrooms to take classes that were above my current grade level. In this way, the small school environment allowed me to personalize my education by eliminating the notion that my grade dictated the level of my education. This developed my tenacity for learning in that I was no longer satisfied with merely meeting expectations, but I constantly strove to surpass them by concentrating all of my effort into every assignment. This love of learning has defined me as I consistently push myself to be the best I can possibly be in every facet of my life.

Once I reached high school, the dependable foundations on which I had been building my education were restructured with the introduction of a new educational system to the Copper River School District. This new system was implemented out of necessity due to budgetary restraints. This led to fewer teachers and the utilization of various online tools to either aid the teachers we had, or replace those we had lost. From that point forward, my education grew to rely upon the availability of online classes and video teleconference systems. It became necessary for me to adjust my learning style as my teachers were no longer in the room with me, and most of my classes were self paced. These new experiences taught me the value of

self-sufficiency, and as a result, I developed a newfound independence and refined a variety of communication skills that have become vital in today's technologically advanced world. These changes equipped me with a mental flexibility that opened my mind towards new concepts and ideas, and afforded me a broadened perspective.

Throughout high school, I retained my love of learning and sought out any position available to me that I believed would allow me to further influence my own education. My freshman and sophomore years, I was the president of my class. My junior year, I was elected the Student Council president, and my duties granted me greater influence over what was discussed at Student Council meetings. It also gave me the opportunity to be more closely involved with school activities. That same year, I attended the Alaska Association of Student Government conference, where I was able to meet with student leaders across the state and collaborate to propose ideas that would improve our schools.

My senior year, I filled the position of student representative for Kenny Lake and Slana on the Copper River School District Board of Education. As a student representative, I attended the Association of Alaska School Boards conferences in both Anchorage and Juneau. Attending these two conferences has helped me to hone my leadership skills and allowed me to meet with a variety of educational leaders and state legislators to share my experiences and influence future legislation. My time in these leadership roles has taught me how to advocate for both myself and my peers, and it has instilled within me the confidence to go out and earn the education that I feel I deserve. It is this determination that will motivate me throughout the rest of my life.

Growing up in a rural community has in no way impeded my development. Indeed, my unique educational experiences have shaped my personality as I have grown to be more driven,

more assertive, more adaptable, and more independent. These traits will serve me well in the future as they will help me to navigate the difficulties of leaving home, furthering my education, beginning my chosen career, and attaining all of my future goals. I believe that because of my unconventional education, I will be ready for all of the curves that life throws my way.