

# ED 631 – SMALL SCHOOL CURRICULUM DESIGN

**INSTRUCTOR:**

**Ray Barnhardt**



**Spring Semester, 2009**

**Center for Distance Education  
University of Alaska Fairbanks  
Fairbanks, Alaska 99775**



UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA FAIRBANKS  
Fairbanks, Alaska 99775

(907) 474-6431

Fax: 474-1957

Spring, 2009

Ed. 631 - Small School Curriculum Design

Course Prospectus  
by  
Ray Barnhardt

**Course Description**

The course will focus on the salient issues involved with the development of educationally sound and culturally appropriate programs of instruction in small schools, including foundational design, conceptual models, organizational strategies, technical skills, current issues and trends, and their implications and application to the environment of rural Alaska.

**Course Purposes**

1. To identify some of the salient features of small schools and critical issues facing education in rural Alaska.
2. To examine various curricular options for expanding educational opportunities in small schools.
3. To explore ways in which Native cultures can provide the foundation for curriculum development in rural schools.
4. To review the role of Elders as knowledge bearers and repositories of expertise that can be integrated as an educational resource into schools in rural Alaska.
5. To examine the role of technology as a tool for enhancing the educational opportunities available to students in rural schools.
6. To critique various educational reform initiatives as to their suitability for improving the quality of schooling in rural Alaska.

**Course Credit**

Completion of the course will lead to three semester hours of graduate credit at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. The course will fulfill the State of Alaska certification requirement for “multicultural education,” and may be applied toward an M.Ed. at UAF.

## Course Design

The course is designed to acquaint students who are located at sites distant from the UAF campus with the same course content they would be exposed to if they were enrolled in the course on campus. In addition, the course attempts to capitalize on the field-based learning opportunities available to off-campus students by incorporating exercises that engage students in on-site data gathering and issue analysis. Since the primary focus of the course is centered in Alaska, many of the readings utilize examples drawn from Alaska Native and rural school situations, though the issues addressed are relevant and readily generalizable to other cultural contexts and school settings as well. If students find an assignment inappropriate to their particular situation, they are invited to contact the instructor to explore a more suitable option.

## Course Administration

The course will be administered through readings, practical exercises, written assignments, and an audioconference for each of the six units. Students will work independently, with academic assistance available from the instructor (474-6431) and administrative support offered through the Center for Distance Education in Fairbanks (474-5353), or the local rural campus. Course assignments should be sent directly to the instructor by e-mail <[ffrjb@uaf.edu](mailto:ffrjb@uaf.edu)>, or if that is not possible, they can be sent by fax or regular mail to me, addressed as follows:

**Ray Barnhardt**  
**Center for Cross-Cultural Studies**  
**University of Alaska Fairbanks**  
**Fairbanks, AK 99775**  
Ph: (907) 474-1902 • Fax: (907) 474-1957  
E-mail: **FFRJB@UAF.EDU**

## Evaluation

Students will be evaluated on the basis of the written material turned in to the instructor (please stay within the page length of each assignment). The material will be read, evaluated, and returned to the student as soon as possible after receipt. The assignments are worth a total of 100 points, with an additional point available for the bonus assignment. The due dates, number of points for each assignment, and the audioconference schedule (**Thurs., 5:00-6:30 pm**) are as follows:

<u>Unit</u>	<u>Due Date</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>Audioconference</u>
1st assignment	February 9	15 points	Feb.5
2nd assignment	February 23	15 points	Feb. 19
3rd assignment	March 16	20 points	Mar. 5
4th assignment	April 6	20 points	Mar. 19
5th assignment	April 20	10 points	Apr. 2
6th assignment	May 4	20 points	Apr. 23
Bonus assignment	May 4	1 point	

Grades for the course will be assigned on the basis of the following point/grade scale:

90 - 100 = A  
80 - 89 = B  
70 - 79 = C  
60 - 69 = D  
0 - 59 = additional work

## **Course Materials**

The following books, articles, curricula and on-line resources are required for this course. The on-line materials will be available for password access on a Moodle web site. To obtain a password, please contact Sean Topkok ([sean@ankn.uaf.edu](mailto:sean@ankn.uaf.edu)) and he will forward the instructions to you.

### **On-line course material:**

First Alaskans Foundation - "Alaska Native Education Study/Indicators"  
Alaska Natives Commission - "Alaska Native Education: Final Report"  
Alaska Department of Education - "Alaska Student Content Standards"  
Alaska Department of Education - "No Child Left Behind/History of Reform" web site  
ANKN - "Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools"(CD) or  
ANKN - "Guidelines for Preparing Culturally Responsive Teachers"(CD) or  
ANKN - "Guidelines for Respecting Cultural Knowledge" (CD) or  
ANKN - "Observing Snow" (CD) or  
Stephens/ANKN/ASC - "Handbook for Culturally Responsive Science Curriculum"(CD) or  
Kawagley - "Yupiaq Education Revisited"  
Murphy/Rutherford - "Native Ways of Knowing" from Alaska Curriculum Framework  
Barnhardt - "Small High Schools Programs for Rural Alaska"  
Dubbs and Barnhardt - "The Log School: A Case for Appropriate Design"  
Barnhardt, R. - "Creating a Place for Indigenous Knowledge in Education: The ANKN"  
Barnhardt, R. - "Two Cultures, One School: St. Mary's, Alaska"  
ANKN - Examples of Alaska Native Cultural Values  
Barnhardt, R. - "Teaching/Learning Across Cultures: Strategies for Success"  
Effie Kokrine Charter School - "SPIRAL Curriculum"  
Ongtooguk - "Their Silence About Us: Why We Need an Alaska Native Curriculum"  
Brown - "Growing Up Digital" <http://www.aahe.org/change/digital.pdf> or  
Scollon - "Axe Handle Academy"  
NWT - "Dene Kede Curriculum: Teacher's Resource Manual"  
NWT - "Inuuqatigiit: The Curriculum from the Inuit Perspective"  
NEA - "C.A.R.E.: Strategies for Closing the Achievement Gaps"  
Wilson - Gwitchin Elders: Not Just Knowledge, But a Way of Looking at the World  
Hampton - "Toward a Redefinition of American Indian/Alaska Native Education"  
Grubis and Oomittuk - "A Point Hope Partnership With the Inupiat Elders of Tikigaq"  
Atwater - "Chul'chen Chul: An Alternative Curriculum for the Single Teacher High School"  
Nelson - "The Athabaskans: People of the Boreal Forest"  
Baffin Divisional Board of Education - "Piniagtavut Integrated Program"  
Quinhagak/Charlie - "Kuingnerrarmiut Yugtaat Elitnaurarkait"  
Hawaii Dept. of Ed. - "Native Hawaiian Curriculum Guide"

### **Print and multi-media material in course packet:**

Kleinfeld, Hagstrom and Parrett - Inventive Teaching  
Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative - "To Show What We Know" (DVD)  
Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative - "Passing On" (DVD)  
Barnhardt/Tonsmeire - Lessons Taught / Lessons Learned, Vol. I & II (CD)  
Diamondstone and Barnhardt - Curriculum Resources for the Alaskan Environment (CD)  
NSBSD - "On the Wings of Tomorrow" and "The Time Weavers" (DVD)

## **Course Requirements**

The course is organized around the following topics:

Unit 1 - Critiques of Education in Rural Alaska	(15 points)
Unit 2 - Curricula Adapted to Small Rural Schools	(15 points)
Unit 3 - Curricula Adapted to Native Cultures	(20 points)
Unit 4 - The Role of Elders in Education	(20 points)
Unit 5 - Technology and Rural Schools	(10 points)
Unit 6 - Models for Educational Reform and Renewal	(20 points)
Bonus - Optional	(1 point)

## Unit 1 - Critiques of Education in Rural Alaska - 15 points

### Required reading:

First Alaskans Foundation - "Alaska Native Education Study/Indicators"  
Alaska Natives Commission - "Alaska Native Education: Final Report"  
Alaska Dept. of Education – "No Child Left Behind/History of Alaska School Reform"  
Hampton - "Toward a Redefinition of American Indian/Alaska Native Education"  
Ongtooguk - "Their Silence About Us: The Absence of Alaska Natives in Curriculum"

Schools in rural Alaska are a species unto themselves. Their degree of remoteness and isolation, the cross-cultural imperatives they must address, the range of societal expectations they must accommodate, the limited staffing and resources available, the high rate of turnover of personnel they experience, and the relative newness of their presence in most villages, combine to make schools in rural Alaska one of the most challenging (and rewarding) places in the country in which to provide a meaningful educational experience for the students and communities they serve. It is to those challenges that this course is addressed. Since "schooling" is still evolving as an institution in rural Alaska, teachers face exceptional demands, as well as exceptional opportunities. The readings and assignments will address both the demands and the opportunities, with ample ideas and resources for making schooling a rich and rewarding experience for the students they serve (and the teachers doing the serving).

In the first assignment, you will be reading three of the most recent reports on efforts to improve education in Alaska, as well as two articles by Native educators commenting on issues related to Native education. In addition to these readings, you should browse the data for your region in the 2004 Alaska Native K-12 Education Indicators Report (published by First Alaskans Institute at <http://www.firstalaskans.org/index.cfm?fa=documents>), and look over your local district's or school's most recent "report card," (should be available from the district). **Your task for this unit is to do a critique and analysis of your district or school as it relates to the issues raised in the readings, drawing on the district/school report card, the K-12 Indicators report, and any other information that you may have available.** To what extent and in what ways is your district/school addressing the issues and/or recommendations that are reflected in the readings. If you are located outside Alaska, you can focus on a site of your choice within Alaska, or you can utilize comparable information from the school district in which you reside. You should write and submit roughly one page of analysis per reading, for a total of five (5) pages.

## Unit 2 - Curricula Adapted to Small Rural Schools - 15 points

### Required reading:

Diamondstone and Barnhardt - Curriculum Resources for the Alaskan Environment (CD)  
Barnhardt, et al - "Small High School Programs for Rural Alaska"  
Atwater - "Chul'chen Chul: An Alternative Curriculum for the Single Teacher High School"  
Kleinfeld, Hagstrom and Parrett - Inventive Teaching  
Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative – "To Show What We Know" (DVD)

In this unit we will look at ways in which small rural schools can address the many curricular demands that are placed on them by turning their size, remoteness and limited staffing into strengths rather than impediments. The readings and DVD offer a variety of strategies and resources that small schools can utilize to provide the breadth and depth of curricular experiences comparable to that offered in larger urban schools. Using the framework and rationale outlined

in the article, “Culture, Community and the Curriculum” (pg. 109 of Diamondstone and Barnhardt), **your task is to write a one-page critique of each of the three remaining readings and DVD in terms of their applicability to the situation in which you are working, and to prepare three (3) project descriptions of your own design comparable in format to those presented in Curriculum Resources for the Alaskan Environment.** What ideas are you able to glean from these readings/DVD that will be of use to you. The projects can be ideas you have already implemented or ideas that you are contemplating for future implementation. You should be submitting seven (7) pages altogether when you are finished.

### **Unit 3 - Curricula Adapted to Native Cultures - 20 points**

Required reading:

Barnhardt - “Teaching/Learning Across Cultures: Strategies for Success”  
Murphy/Rutherford – Alaska Curriculum Framework (“Native Ways of Knowing” section)  
Nelson - “The Athabaskans: People of the Boreal Forest”  
Kawagley - “Yupiaq Education Revisited”  
Quinhagak/Charlie - “Kuingnerrarmiut Yugtaat Elitnaurarkait”  
Baffin Divisional Board of Education - “Piniagtavut Integrated Program”  
NWT - “Dene Kede Curriculum: Teacher’s Resource Manual”  
NWT - “Inuuqatigiit: The Curriculum from the Inuit Perspective”  
Effie Kokrine Charter School – “SPIRAL Curriculum”

In this unit, we will be taking a look at how culture comes into play in small schools in rural Alaska, with an emphasis on how you can build on the cultural base available in the community to strengthen the educational experiences of the students being served. As you look through the materials for this unit you will see some common themes that cut across all the different Native cultural groups represented. For example, they all break away from the conventional categories of subject matter (social studies, language arts, math, science, etc.) and create categories that are more in tune with how we experience the world around us. The Dene Kede curriculum is organized around land, people, spirit and self. The Piniagtavut curriculum is structured around land, sea, sky and community. The Athabaskan teacher’s guide is based on people, environment, technology and continuity and change. Kawagley proposes a framework built around the “five elements of life,” earth, air, fire, water and spirit. The curriculum Effie Kokrine Charter School in Fairbanks is organized around 12 themes. Within each of these is the potential to address all the knowledge and skills that we would typically expect to cover in a Western oriented, academic discipline based curriculum. The question is, on what basis do we determine which is the most appropriate approach for the development of curricula that is suitable to the educational needs of any particular cultural group? Should we be striving for one common curriculum for all students, or should curricula be grounded in the world view, beliefs, values and life style of the people and communities to whom it is directed? These are open questions for which there are no single or simple answers. So, your assignment is twofold:

1. **Using the Barnhardt article as a guide, choose any five of the curriculum models provided and write a one-page critique of each indicating how they are or are not consistent with the ideas outlined in the article.**
2. **Chose any one of the curriculum models and describe (in 2-3 pages) how you would go about implementing any parts or all of the curriculum in your classroom/school/community. What steps would you take and why, and what problems**



do you anticipate you would encounter? Refer to the Alaska Curriculum Frameworks section on “Native Ways of Knowing” to help guide you through this task (<http://www.educ.state.ak.us/tls/frameworks/content.htm> – go to “Starting Point” and then click on “Context” and scroll toward the last section).

#### **Unit 4 - The Role of Elders in Education - 20 points**

Required reading:

Wilson - Gwitchin Elders: Not Just Knowledge, But a Way of Looking at the World  
Grubis and Oomittuk - "A Point Hope Partnership With the Inupiat Elders of Tikigaaq"  
Barnhardt, R. - "Two Cultures, One School: St. Mary's, Alaska"  
ANKN - Examples of Alaska Native Cultural Values  
Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative – "Passing On" (DVD)  
ANKN – "Guidelines for Respecting Cultural Knowledge"  
Stephens/ANKN/ASC – "Handbook for Culturally Responsive Science Curriculum" (CD)  
ANKN – "Observing Snow" (CD)

Among of the most valuable community resources available to schools in rural Alaska are the local Elders. However, the knowledge and expertise that Elders can provide does not always blend well with the conventional school curriculum, ways of teaching, or classroom setting. In this unit we will take a closer look at what the role of "Elder" means in Native communities, and some ways in which Elders expertise can be integrated into the educational system in culturally appropriate and non-patronizing ways. To do so requires whole-school considerations comparable to those described in the St. Mary's case study, and a commitment to the kind of cultural values outlined in the examples provided from various regions.

**Your task for this unit is to develop (and if possible, implement) a curriculum unit (any length) in which you utilize the expertise of one or more elders, and/or in which you incorporate the Native cultural values from one or more of the lists provided on the ANKN web site. You should submit a 3-5 page report in which you describe your unit, and if you were able to implement it, provide a critique of how well it went. Who learned what, and why? If you are not currently in a situation where you can carry out such an exercise, adapt the assignment to make effective use of some form of cultural resources and/or expertise in your community.**

#### **Unit 5 - Technology and Rural Schools - 10 points**

Required reading:

Alaska Native Knowledge Network Web Site <http://www.ankn.uaf.edu>  
Alaska DOE – "Technology Standards" in Alaska Student Content Standards web site  
Brown – "Growing Up Digital"  
NSBSD - "On the Wings of Tomorrow" (video tape)  
Dubbs and Barnhardt - "The Log School: A Case for Appropriate Design"

The role of technology in enhancing educational opportunities in rural schools continues to evolve and change at a rapid rate. A list of some of the more current technology applications available to schools is included with the Brown article. Not all technology lives up to advanced billing, however, and not all schools or teachers are prepared to make the most effective use of what is available, so it is important to have some basis on which to determine cost-effectiveness and educational efficacy. After reading the articles and watching the video tape, **your task for this unit is to prepare an inventory of how technology is being utilized in your school** (or one with which you are familiar) including (but not limited to) how computers are being used in the classroom, the kind of voc-tech options that are available, and how the facility itself contributes to or detracts from the instructional program. **Following the inventory summary,**

**prepare a set of recommendations for how the role and use of technology in your school could be improved as it relates to the Alaska “Technology Standards.”** What steps should be taken and why? The recommendations can be addressed to your colleagues, principal, district office, and/or the school board. **Finally, check out the ANKN web site and offer some ideas on how the resources that are available there could be utilized to enhance your curriculum.** Altogether, this assignment should come to no more than five (5) pages.

## Unit 6 - Models for Educational Reform and Renewal - 20 points

### Required reading:

Barnhardt/Tonsmeire - Lessons Taught / Lessons Learned, Vol. I & II  
Scollon – “Axe Handle Academy”  
Murphy/Rutherford – “Native Ways of Knowing” in Alaska Curriculum Framework (on line)  
Barnhardt, R. – “Creating a Place for Indigenous Knowledge in Education”  
NSBSD - “The Time Weavers” (video tape)  
Hawaii Dept. of Ed. – “Native Hawaiian Curriculum Guide”  
NEA – “C.A.R.E.: Strategies for Closing the Achievement Gaps”  
Alaska Dept. of Education – “No Child Left Behind/History of Alaska School Reform”  
Alaska Department of Education - “Alaska Student Content Standards”  
Alaska Native Knowledge Network – “Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools”  
Alaska Native Knowledge Network – “Guidelines for Preparing Culturally Responsive Teachers”

Educational reform comes in many colors, shapes and sizes. Some of the initiatives are limited to specific subject areas while others are “systemic” in design, seeking to reform schools inside and out, top to bottom. The sampling provided in the readings feature three reform initiatives that are currently prominent in Alaska - outcomes-based education and strategic planning, Alaska Quality Schools standards-based initiatives, and an initiative aimed at the “systemic integration of indigenous and Western knowledge” as a route to educational reform in rural schools. In Lessons Taught / Lessons Learned, you will read about the “Axe Handle Academy” (also available at <http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/AxeHandleAcademy/axe/index.htm>) and an “integrated bilingual and cross-cultural” approach to rural curriculum reform and renewal. All of these initiatives offer different routes for how schools can improve their services.

**Your task for this unit is to develop your own plan for educational reform and renewal, utilizing the “Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools” as the template.**

Drawing on the readings from this and the previous units, as well as on your own experience and insights regarding what can make a positive difference in rural schools, design your own ideal school for rural Alaska, using the Alaska Cultural Standards as a guide. For additional ideas on content and format for this assignment, refer to the readings, in particular the articles in the two volumes of Lessons Taught / Lessons Learned, where other teachers have put forward their vision of the ideal rural school and curriculum. The paper for this assignment should be in the 6-8 page range. Let your creative juices flow!

### **Optional Bonus Assignment** - 1 point

Please write a one page critique of this course, including critical comments on both the format and the content, as well as your assessment of the readings. This assignment is worth one point no matter what you say, so say what you think. I won’t read it until after the other assignments have been graded.

Good luck, and good work!