

An Exploration of Experiences and Outcomes of Alaska Native Graduates of Mt.
Edgecumbe High School

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Introduction

In Alaska's schools, indigenous¹ students are the most at risk of any ethnic group of failing to thrive; they drop out more frequently, are less likely to graduate, and generally have lower educational attainment than non-Native students (Martin and Hill, 2009). Indeed, the situation appears to be worsening. The dropout rate of Alaska Native students living in all areas of Alaska besides Anchorage has risen from 0.7 percent in 1996 to 3.3 percent in 2001 (Goldsmith et al. 2004). Dropout rates among all Native students in Alaska increased from 5 percent to almost 10 percent between 1998 and 2001, while the dropout rate among non-Native students increased from about 3 percent to 5 percent (ibid). In addition, low test scores are preventing many students from graduating from high school—almost half of Alaska Native students are not passing the reading section of the High-School Graduation Qualifying Exam. The educational system in Alaska is failing to provide Alaska Native students the skills necessary either for post-secondary academic work or success in the job market, if that is what they desire.

However, one secondary school, Mt. Edgecumbe High School, a boarding school located in Southeast Alaska that serves predominately rural and Alaska Native students, has produced students that consistently outperform their peers, both indigenous and non-Native. The reputation of the school has been strong for decades, based on both historic and recent accomplishments of its alumni. However, the experiences of recent alumni at the school and their professional and educational attainment after high school had not been looked at systematically for a number of years.

This paper is the result of a study conducted by the authors on recent graduates of Mt. Edgecumbe High School (MEHS), at the suggestion of school administrators. Our case study attempts to capture the educational, social, and cultural experiences of the students while they attended the boarding school, and the impacts the school has had on their lives. With this research we hope to inform the decisions of policymakers and educators, indigenous and non-Native alike, regarding rural secondary schooling options in Alaska for indigenous children across the state.

A Brief History of Boarding Schools in Alaska

Alaska became a United States territory in 1867. However, it wasn't until 1884 that a federal mechanism for providing education was developed, as part of the Organic Act, the first official federal legislation affecting Alaska. Early education policymakers in territorial Alaska viewed traditional Native societies as uncivilized, morally deficient, and in need of change. Their goals for formal education were to Christianize and "civilize" Natives in order to accommodate the economic and cultural needs of the dominant Western society (Darnell and Hoem, 1996, p. 62). Indeed the government used missionaries to fulfill educational responsibilities across much of Alaska for several decades. Rev. Sheldon Jackson, the head of the missionary movement in Alaska, became the U.S. government's first General Agent for Education in the territory. He promoted educating Natives to forget their home lives and get "moral as well as intellectual instruction," arguing that schools should "provide such education as to prepare the

¹ We use the panethnic terms indigenous or Alaska Native in this paper with full awareness that many peoples lumped into these categories have reservations about their use.

natives to take up the industries and modes of life established in the States by our white population, and by all means not to try to continue the tribal life ..." (Morehouse, 1992, p. 8.)."

One of the educational mechanisms for achieving this goal was the boarding school. The public boarding schools attended by Alaska Native students were extensions of a system initially developed in the 19th century by the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). Those schools were created for American Indian students with the explicit intent of assimilating these youngsters (McDiarmid, 1984). For the first three quarters of the 20th century indigenous students from rural communities in Alaska were sent involuntarily to boarding schools or boarding homes either inside or outside Alaska. In 1972, attorney Christopher Cooke filed a class action lawsuit on behalf of Alaska Native children in villages lacking secondary schools. The Alaska Supreme Court remanded *Hootch v. Alaska State-Operated School System*, also known as the Molly Hootch case, for trial on the claim that that state's failure to provide local high schools in Native villages constituted a pattern and practice of racial discrimination. Plaintiffs demonstrated that predominately white communities had high schools, while Native communities—even larger ones—were required to send their children to boarding schools or homes. After a year of negotiations, the state and the plaintiffs reached an out-of-court settlement. Under the 1976 *Tobeluk v. Lind* consent decree the State of Alaska agreed to build a system of village high schools serving any community with eight or more students of high-school age (later changed to ten or more students). Within six years, the state implemented new or expanded high school programs in more than 100 Native villages (Cotton, 1984).

With the development of rural secondary schools throughout the state, most of the state's boarding schools were closed, including MEHS. However, MEHS was reopened after only two years, as a reconfigured state-operated school.

Mt. Edgecumbe High School

The Bureau of Indian Affairs opened Mt. Edgecumbe High School as a residential high school for Alaska Natives in 1947, at the site of a World War II Naval Air Station in Sitka, a community in Southeast Alaska. The school enrolled Native students from all over the territory, and offered both academic and vocational education. From 1947 to 1965 MEHS was the only public secondary school within Alaska available to Alaska Native children living in rural communities with no secondary school. The state eventually opened several regional boarding schools, but none were as large or long lived as MEHS.

The BIA closed Mt. Edgecumbe in 1983 after educating more than 9,000 Alaska Native children over a time span of thirty-six years. In 1985, researchers at the Institute of Social and Economic Research examined the educational programs offered by Alaska's small rural high schools, the problems these schools face, and the solutions that districts and schools are using to solve these problems (Kleinfeld, McDiarmid, and Hagstrom 1985).

Among their findings, the researchers found that the majority of rural communities in 1985 wanted a village high school, as well as the option of sending their children to boarding school. While rural educators and local people wanted local high schools to be the "backbone" of the rural secondary education system in Alaska, they

recognized the need for an alternative to small high schools for students who need to leave the community due to social issues in the home or community, academically advanced students who cannot always be challenged by a small high school with limited course availability and sometimes poor teacher quality, and for students who desire more extra-curricular activities and a greater social life than the local, rural, small high school has to offer. Attending Mt. Edgecumbe High School in Southeast Alaska was not an option at the time this study was conducted, since the school was closed from 1983 to fall of 1985 (Kleinfeld et al. 1985).

The researchers found that while most people favored a boarding school option, they were divided in terms of their opinions on whether or not the state of Alaska should reopen Mt. Edgecumbe. Many advocated that Mt. Edgecumbe be reopened to provide rural students an alternative to small local high schools, and to preserve and continue Mt. Edgecumbe's historical importance and influence in Native education and politics, as many of its former students had gone on to become prominent Alaska Native leaders. Those opposed to reopening the school argued that it would be a very expensive move for the state, and that the money instead should go to strengthening rural secondary education by hiring specialized teachers who could travel between districts, or by offering summer college preparation programs on campus (Kleinfeld et al. 1985). In 1985, in response to lobbying from Alaska Native leaders, the State Board of Education made the decision to reopen Mt. Edgecumbe High School for the 1985-1986 academic school year. \ It has since provided a secondary education in a residential setting to over a thousand youths from all throughout Alaska.

Mt. Edgecumbe High School is now a state-operated boarding school, but looks drastically different than it did thirty years ago. Despite its growing size, the student body is much smaller in number than it was while under BIA control, and is much more diverse though still predominately Alaska Native. Most importantly, Mt. Edgecumbe High School is now a school of choice, whereas prior to 1975, attendance was mandated by the BIA. Mt. Edgecumbe offers many students a broader curriculum, more specialized teachers, extracurricular activities, and preparation for postsecondary education than might be available to them in their home communities. Of the applicants, Mt. Edgecumbe gives preference to students who have limited or no access to secondary education in their local communities, most of whom are Alaska Native. Currently, Mt. Edgecumbe High School has a student body of over 400 students, representing more than 100 Alaskan communities.

Study Questions

This study focuses on those who have attended Mt. Edgecumbe High School since its reopening, and attempts to capture their experiences while at Mt. Edgecumbe, and the impacts it has had in their lives. Through surveys and interviews with alumni and interviews with key informants such as former and current teachers and administrators, we address the following questions:

- Why did graduates choose to attend Mt. Edgecumbe High School?
- What were the educational, social, and cultural experiences of students who attended Mt. Edgecumbe High School?
- How well did Mt. Edgecumbe High School prepare the graduates for their futures?

- How has Mt. Edgecumbe High School played a role in the lives of the graduates since they completed high school?

We hope that this study will inform policy decisions regarding rural secondary schooling options for Native students in Alaska. Currently, some policymakers contend that additional state-funded boarding schools should be established, both because of concern over the cost of maintaining rural secondary schools and the quality of the education provided in some of these settings. Mt. Edgecumbe High School has a history of producing Alaska's Native leaders, and of providing a high quality education to its students, which continues to encourage students from rural Alaska to apply to the boarding school (McDowell Group 1994a). Elected officials often focus on the accomplishments of Mt. Edgecumbe graduates as a reason to expand the Alaska state-funded boarding school program. It is important thus to document not only the strengths and weaknesses of the school, but also why graduates chose to attend boarding school, and how this choice has affected their lives.

This research offers feedback regarding the overall benefits and drawbacks of boarding schools, as well as insight as to why some students attend boarding school. This study also provides officials with a better understanding of what Native students themselves believe are necessary components to the successful education of Alaska Natives, as well as a description of what Native students believe is missing from rural secondary schools, causing them to look outside their home communities in order to meet their educational needs.

Theoretical Framework

Our study primarily builds on the research by Carole L. Seyfrit and Lawrence C. Hamilton on Alaska Native youth and their ethnic identity, aspirations, and attitudes toward education (Seyfrit et al. 1998; Seyfrit and Hamilton 1997). In their study, "Alaska Native Youth and Their Attitudes toward Education," Seyfrit and Hamilton explore Alaska Native high school students' perceptions of the quality of education they receive at their school, the amount of adult encouragement they receive to go to college, and where they expect to live in the future. Seyfrit and Hamilton explain that most rural Alaska students have the option of remaining in their village for high school, boarding in private homes and attending school in a larger regional town, or attending Mt. Edgecumbe High School. With Mt. Edgecumbe's positive reputation and excess number of applications received each year, many state education officials debate whether it is more cost-effective to maintain expensive high school programs in villages with few students or to build more expensive boarding schools that can educate a greater number of students. Seyfrit and Hamilton compared the responses of students in village schools, town schools, and a boarding school to help inform this debate about school systems by gauging the attitudes of Alaska Native youth toward education. They surveyed students who attended school in rural Alaska villages, in larger Alaskan towns, and Mt. Edgecumbe High School (1997).

One of the most interesting results of the survey appears in differences between village, town, and boarding school students in regards to their perceived quality of education available to them. They found that students who attended Mt. Edgecumbe were far more likely than students from a village or town school to believe that the education they were receiving would help them compete for a good job anywhere in the

nation, and less likely to believe that people from their home community could be successful in post-secondary education. 86 percent of boarding school students felt that “the education they are receiving will help them compete for good jobs anywhere in the nation,” compared with only 53 percent of town students and 68 percent of village students. In addition, only 66 percent of boarding school students believed a person who graduates from high school in their home community could be successful in post-secondary education, compared with 92 percent of village students and 87 percent of town students who held this belief. This suggests that boarding school students may perceive the education they receive at Mt. Edgecumbe as being better able to provide them with a chance for success after high school than what the school in their home communities had to offer, and that boarding school students have more realistic perceptions of the quality of education necessary for success past high school (Seyfrit and Hamilton 1997).

Boarding school students were also significantly more likely than village and town school students to expect they would go to college and to spend most of their lives outside of Alaska. Seyfrit and Hamilton attribute this to the fact that only 56 percent of boarding school students believe their ideal job is available in rural Alaska, compared with 63 percent of town students and 72 percent of village students. Regardless of this belief, of the 649 Alaska Native students surveyed, 82 percent believed they would live someplace other than their home communities for most of their adult lives. Once again, this suggests that boarding school students may perceive the education they receive at Mt. Edgecumbe as being better able to provide them with a chance for success after high school than what the school in their home communities had to offer, and that boarding school students have more realistic perceptions of the quality of education necessary for success past high school. This is further supported by the fact that the boarding school students were more likely to expect to go to college than village and town school students, and more likely to anticipate living outside of their home community and region for the rest of their lives. This research highlights that Mt. Edgecumbe High School may engender in Alaska Native youth more ambition, self esteem, and independence than is developed in Alaska Native youth who attend high school in their home village or town.

In 1999, Seyfrit and Hamilton conducted a follow-up survey with students who responded to their Alaska High School Student Survey in 1995 to track changes in their occupational and educational aspirations and experiences over the course of four years. The 1995 survey had revealed that Mt. Edgecumbe High School students had higher occupational and educational aspirations in comparison to students from rural village, town, and urban schools, and that 57 percent of Mt. Edgecumbe High School students expected to be employed full time after graduating from high school and that 90 percent expected to attend college. The 1999 survey confirmed that of the students in 1995 who reported plans of attending college, 73 percent had attended or were currently attending a post-secondary education institution. 58 percent of these students also reported that they planned on obtaining at least an undergraduate degree within the next five years, while 26 percent reported that they would receive a vocational-technical certificate, attend at least one semester of college, or obtain an Associate’s degree. Those who worked after graduating from high school found jobs in the farming, forestry, and fishing industries, administrative support positions, and sales. Many noted that the jobs they had obtained

were seasonal, and the researchers report that the majority of students held seasonal jobs in the summer, and then left their jobs to return to college in the fall. This suggests that the students placed a high value on the need for higher education, and may have valued education as a way to attain a satisfying career (Seyfrit and Hamilton 2002).

Cultural Toolkit Theory

Seyfrit and Hamilton further explore this idea in their study, “Ethnic Identity and Aspirations among Rural Alaska Youth” (1998), drawing on the idea of a “cultural tool kit,” as developed by Swidler (1986), to explain why some Alaska Native youth are more likely to attend college or move to an unfamiliar city than others. The cultural tool kit theory is based on the idea that in order to achieve a certain goal or lifestyle, one needs socialization as well as an “image of the kind of world” in which one wants to live. Individuals have a “tool kit” full of cultural knowledge and experience obtained through everyday interactions in their families, schools, and communities, providing them with a sense of who they are, and what are appropriate aspirations. The norms and relationships that make up their social capital affect how an individual’s tool kit is filled, influencing his perception of who one is, where one belongs, and what one can become.

Seyfrit and Hamilton argue that Alaska Native students who have parents and grandparents that are supportive of higher education are more likely to go to college because their elders have equipped their cultural tool kit with an image of their self as a college student. Their 1995 survey of Alaska Native students found that while students from village, town, and boarding schools were equally likely to believe that their parents wanted them to go to college, there were differences in perceptions as to whether their grandparents wanted them to attend college. 63% of village students and 68% of town students reported that they thought their grandparents wanted them to attend college, while an overwhelming 84% of boarding school students perceived this encouragement from their grandparents. Only 28% of boarding school students reported receiving a lot of encouragement to go to trade or technical school, compared with 37% of town students and 44% of village students (Seyfrit and Hamilton 1997). Boarding school students were also much less likely than village and town students to agree that “high school ought to prepare them for adult life in their home community or a small village or town,” with less than half (44%) agreeing with the statement, compared to 58% and 71% respectively (p. 138, 1997).

Our research examines how Alaska Native students’ cultural tool kits enable them to see Mt. Edgecumbe High School as an option for secondary education, and how their experiences at the boarding school may have expanded their tool kit for further aspirations and successes in life.

Methods and Participants

We used a combination of survey research methods and in depth interviews to inform this study. Our target survey population was all graduates of Mt. Edgecumbe High School who completed their education between 1986 and 2006. The survey was conducted both by mail and through Zoomerang, an online survey software, and was administered from May 2007 to August 2008. The survey includes both closed and open ended items, and was designed to gather information on the demographics of the graduates; why they chose to attend Mt. Edgecumbe High School; their educational,

social, and cultural experiences at the school; what they did after graduation; and their overall opinions on the boarding school. We used a snowball sampling method to recruit our study participants, and it is important to note that this is a non-representative sample. The quantitative data was compiled and analyzed primarily with simple summary statistics, including measures of central tendency, frequency distributions and cross-tabulation data. Open ended questions were coded and analyzed for patterns and trends. We used this data to answer questions regarding the experiences of students while at Mt. Edgecumbe, their lives after high school, and the contribution of Mt. Edgecumbe to their adult lives and careers.

In the summer of 2008, we conducted in depth interviews with a subsample (seven) of our survey respondents who volunteered for this piece of the study. They again are not a representative group, but rather a sample of convenience. The interview questions were designed to gather information our survey items may have missed. Interviews with key informants such as Mt. Edgecumbe High School teachers, counselors, and administrators were used to round out the data collection and to provide contextual information. We coded the interviews for emerging themes and commonalities across the interviews.

We received completed surveys from 164 graduates out of approximately 1000 alumni. Our survey captures respondents who graduated in every consecutive year between 1986 and 2006, the targeted time period of our study. Of our respondents, one-hundred-and-eighteen are female, and 45 are male. 90 percent self-identify as Alaska Native, and tribal affiliations include Aleut/Unangan, Alutiiq, Athabaskan, Inupiaq, Tlingit, Haida, Tshimshian, and Yup'ik. Our respondents hailed from every region in Alaska, and the majority came to Mt. Edgecumbe from some of the state's most remote villages. Our respondents came from as far north as Barrow and Atkasuk, to the westernmost island communities of Gambell, Atka, Saint Paul, and Saint George, and from interior communities such as Fort Yukon and Arctic Village. Together, they represent over 65 communities of Alaska. Of our respondents, 142 currently live in Alaska, while 18 live outside of the state.

Findings

Many themes and interesting trends have emerged from our research. In this paper we focus on why graduates are choosing to attend Mt. Edgecumbe High School, their academic, extra-curricular, and cultural experiences while at the school, their accomplishments since graduation, and if they would recommend Mt. Edgecumbe to youth in their home community and to their own children.

Choosing to Go

For our participants, family members and peer groups were the most influential in informing them about the opportunity for secondary education outside of their home community. 74 percent of respondents first heard about Mt. Edgecumbe High School from a family member, and 38 percent were reportedly told about the boarding school by a friend. 17 percent of respondents were told about Mt. Edgecumbe by a teacher or a mentor, and members of their home communities informed 16 percent of our respondents. 59 percent report that they chose to go because a family member had

attended in the past, and 18 percent chose to attend because a community member had gone to Mt. Edgecumbe.

Of our respondents, the vast majority attended Mt. Edgecumbe High School for educational purposes. 82 percent aspired to attend Mt. Edgecumbe High School because it promised them a higher quality of education than was available to them in their home communities. As one former student explained, “[at my old school] the teachers seemed like they were there just to keep the peace in the classroom. It didn’t seem like learning was part of the equation, it was all about basketball.” Another stated that “...the village had a population of about 110 at the time. Not enough challenges in school, lack of peers, lack of extra-curricular activities inside and outside of school...I saw [Mt. Edgecumbe High School] as an opportunity to become successful.” 39 percent attended because there were extra-curricular activities offered at Mt. Edgecumbe that were not offered in their home town or village.

While many of our respondents chose to attend Mt. Edgecumbe because they wanted more academic and extra-curricular opportunities than their home community had to offer, there were other influences as well, including a desire to escape communities or homes with drug and alcohol abuse. Of our respondents, ten mentioned alcohol or drug problems in their school or community as a reason to attend Mt. Edgecumbe, while 19 listed problems in the home such as abuse and domestic violence, parents separating, or issues with step-parents as a reason why they chose to leave their home community to attend boarding school. Others listed problems such as discrimination and poor living conditions in their home community, including a lack of running water, as a reason to go to Mt. Edgecumbe. 16 percent chose to attend Mt. Edgecumbe because of these and similar issues in their home community, and 12 percent cited difficulties in home life as a reason why they attended the boarding school. For these students, attending Mt. Edgecumbe was an opportunity not just for a higher quality of education, but also for a higher quality of life.

Academic Experiences

When Mt. Edgecumbe High School was owned and operated by the BIA, the school had a heavy vocational emphasis with a focus on trades such as welding, carpentry, and small engine mechanics. When the school was reopened by the State of Alaska in 1985, the emphasis was shifted away from vocational training and toward Pacific Rim studies and entrepreneurship. As a result, in addition to the English, math, and science classes required by the State, students are required to take five credits of social studies courses, and two credits of computer classes to graduate. Interviews with both key informants and our survey respondents indicate that teachers have high expectations of their students at Mt. Edgecumbe, and students are expected to come to the boarding school prepared to and willing to learn from qualified and knowledgeable teachers. 97 percent rated their overall educational experience at Mt. Edgecumbe as “excellent” or “good,” listing a broad curriculum and adequate preparation for college as important factors:

“Considering the options my parents gave me, the curriculum offered in my hometown paled in comparison to that offered at MEHS.”

“I was a top student in my previous high school prior to attending Mt. Edgecumbe. When I started MEHS, I learned that I can fail without working very hard. This prepared me for college.”

“The high quality of education helped me prepare for college life. The ability to think for myself and be independent was critical for me to easily transition into college.”

An overwhelming 98 percent of our respondents rated Mt. Edgecumbe as “excellent” or “good” in helping its students to develop academic learning skills. Mt. Edgecumbe students are also allowed to take college courses in the community of Sitka. 79 percent of the respondents received college credit while attending Mt. Edgecumbe—many through the University of Alaska, Southeast Sitka campus that sits adjacent to the school, and some through Sheldon Jackson College, also located in Sitka. One student notes, “The education experience that I received at MEHS was above average. It had far exceeded the educational extra-curricular experiences that I would have had staying in my home community.”

Extra-Curricular Experiences

Our participants were involved in a variety of extra-curricular activities while they attended Mt. Edgecumbe High School. Of our respondents, 46 percent were members of National Honor Society, 38 percent participated in student government, and 36 percent were involved with the school newspaper. Sports also played a large role in the lives of these students outside of school—45 percent played basketball, 36 percent enjoyed cross-country running, and 32 percent were on the school volleyball team. There were also extra-curricular opportunities that provided cultural learning experiences for students. 37 percent were involved in one or more of the various Alaska Native dance groups, 31 percent participated in actively learning a world language, and 28 percent were members of a Japan, Russia, or China cultural club.

Cultural experiences

The curriculum at Mt. Edgecumbe incorporates a Pacific Rim focus, and students are offered the opportunity to take Japanese, Russian, and Chinese classes, and have in the past been able to participate in an exchange program with these countries. Reflecting on these opportunities, 78 percent of respondents remark that Mt. Edgecumbe did an “excellent” or “good” job in teaching them about other cultures. However, only 31 percent of respondents report that the school did an “excellent” or “good” job in teaching them about their own, Alaska Native culture. 39 percent rated the school as “fair” in this category, and 30 percent felt they did a “poor” or “very poor” job.

Many Native leaders and educators believe it is the school’s responsibility to help students mediate between their traditional indigenous cultures and Western culture, and that they should help students find the balance in walking in both Alaska Native and non-Native worlds. Many researchers argue, however, that a school that is strongly rooted in one culture and biased by its history as a Western institution cannot help students understand their other cultural world, particularly when the school and its curriculum clearly demonstrates that it values one language and culture over the other, and its understanding of the other culture is limited (Henze and Vanett, 1993).

This is a controversial debate that echoes across all schools in the culturally rich state of Alaska. In our interviews with key informants, both administrators and teachers reported that formally educating students about their heritage or culture was not viewed as a responsibility or goal of Mt. Edgecumbe. The majority of our study participants noted, however, that there are many informal cultural learning experiences that take place between students outside of school, as they teach each other about where they are from, and their way of life back home. But still for some rural Alaska Native students, the price of receiving a higher quality of Western education at Mt. Edgecumbe than is available to them in their home community may come at the cost of missing out on valuable, traditional and cultural knowledge being taught at home.

After Graduation

Within one year of graduation, 47 percent of respondents began attending college in Alaska, while an additional 28 percent began attending college outside of Alaska. This means that 75 percent of our respondents headed to college right after graduating from Mt. Edgecumbe High School. Of our respondents, 91 percent immediately or eventually sought formal postsecondary education or training after graduating from Mt. Edgecumbe. The in depth interviews with a subsample of graduates revealed that many students were not only encouraged, but were *expected* by teachers, counselors, and administrators to seek postsecondary education after graduating from Mt. Edgecumbe. This may have equipped their toolkits with an image of seeing themselves as college students, while the education they received provided them with the tools necessary to attend college and to succeed in attaining a degree. 24 percent reported that they achieved a bachelor's degree, and 11 percent finished school with a graduate or professional degree. 41 percent of respondents reported that they had completed some college, and this includes the 24 respondents who are still currently in school.

49 percent of our participants began working within their first year of graduating from high school, and today, 110 of our participants are employed full time, and 9 are currently working part time. They are engaged in a variety of jobs and careers, and our participants include 13 teachers, a lawyer, an anthropologist, a whaling captain, and a tribal executive director. Many respondents are now health care professionals, and several hold prominent positions in private business and native corporations. 9 are not working, 6 are homemakers, and 3 are self-employed.

Since graduating from Mt. Edgecumbe High School, 40 percent of the respondents did not return to their home community. Of the 60 percent that did, 30 percent remained less than one year and 15 percent left within five years. Only 15 percent of our respondents returned to their home community for more than five years, which means 85 percent of our respondents chose not to return to their home community after attending Mt. Edgecumbe. This high migration rate is not uncommon for Alaska. A recent article in *Alaska Economic Trends*, published by the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, reveals that in an analysis of more than 16,000 Alaskans ages 15 and 16 in 1994, 40 percent had moved out of state by 2002, or by the time they were 23 and 24. Alaska has one of the highest migration rates in the nation, with older youth and young adults being the likeliest to move. This phenomenon has been called a "brain drain" for Alaska, as 38 percent of these young Alaskans are leaving

for college and/or jobs opportunities outside of the state, and are not returning (Hadland 2004).

While our sample is not representative, it is important to note that while 85 percent of our respondents did not choose to permanently return to their home community, 87 percent did choose to remain in Alaska, which means a substantially low number of our respondents chose to leave the state for a job or similar opportunity outside. The in depth interviews revealed that many of our respondents chose to remain and attend college in Alaska after graduating from high school because they would be close to home, but the majority did not return to or settle in their home communities because they felt their home community could not offer them adequate job opportunities to match their high educational attainment or to help them meet their professional goals. While this may appear as a brain drain on small rural Alaskan communities, the interview participants did express a desire and a goal to give back to their home communities and home regions through their jobs in healthcare, native corporations, public policy, and education.

Recommending Mt. Edgecumbe High School

96% of respondents said they would recommend Mt. Edgecumbe High School to youth in their home community. Once again, many mentioned drug and alcohol problems in their community as a reason to leave and attend Mt. Edgecumbe:

“More opportunities are available [at Mt. Edgecumbe High School] than are offered in some of the rural communities. Also, this gives students an opportunity to meet other students and be away from drugs and alcohol. Sometimes in the village, there is no escape from these pressures, but at MEHS there is.”

Others, however, mentioned the importance of cultural and traditional knowledge as a reason to consider whether or not to encourage youth to remain in their home community:

“It would depend on the student. Some people would benefit from staying at home, especially if they have a real traditional Native family and lifestyle I would have them stay at home and learn the old ways as best as they can. The kind of knowledge you can get from elders like grandparents is irreplaceable. However, if there’s trouble at home and no way to escape to a kind relative, I would say, get the heck out of there, don’t even look back.”

In terms of recommending Mt. Edgecumbe to their own children, our findings are consistent with those of the McDowell Group study (1994b): 80 percent of our participants said they would encourage their own children to go, 16 percent fewer than would encourage other youths from their home community to attend. Examples of the reasons most often cited for not sending their children are:

“Because I just simply want them home with me.”

“I wouldn’t want them away from me. Too far.”

“If I lived in the village I would recommend this school to my own children. The village would be detrimental to our children and therefore I would recommend MEHS. But, since we live in a larger community of Fairbanks there is a variety

of education for them along with a structured family life that their father and I will provide.”

For those that would send their children, the high quality of education offered at Mt. Edgecumbe and the escape the boarding school provides from issues in rural Alaska remain as crucial reasons why our respondents would send their children:

“More opportunities are available than offered in some of the rural communities. Also, this gives students an opportunity to meet other students and be away from drugs and alcohol. Sometimes in the village, there is no escape from these pressures, but at MEHS there is.”

“I would love to send my own children. The education that I received cannot be matched.”

“They will attend MEHS, if accepted. As Alaska Natives in a town where cultural involvement is chastised at the middle and high school level, I feel they will find it beneficial to attend MEHS rather than [name] HS.”

“[MEHS is] good preparation for college life.”

Conclusion

It is evident in our findings that the cultural toolkits of our study participants have certainly influenced their educational choices, and that Mt. Edgecumbe High School has made a significant contribution to these toolkits. For our respondents, Mt. Edgecumbe High School has provided them with a high quality education, while equipping them with the tools necessary to complete high school. For many, these tools have allowed them to attend and finish college, and/or to secure a successful career. When asked to reflect on their overall experience at the school, ninety-four percent of our respondents rated their time at Mt. Edgecumbe as “excellent” or “good.” One student with an “excellent” experience explains the influence the school has had on her life:

Mt. Edgecumbe has been one of the greatest influences that I’ve had in my life. I was given the education that I deserve and [it] helped prepare me for college...Mt. Edgecumbe has a great sense of community, greater than I had ever felt even in my own village...[During my time at Mt. Edgecumbe] I had the chance to learn more about my own culture, and was simultaneously learning about the other cultures that surrounded me... I went to Mt. Edgecumbe knowing that I was Native, but I left having a strong identity as an Athabascan woman and it shapes my goals. I also had the resources available to let me know about the opportunities that I have: college, internships, vocational school. Mt. Edgecumbe is all about learning, in more ways than academics.

More importantly, Mt. Edgecumbe High School is providing rural students seeking better opportunities with a higher quality of education than is available to them in their home communities. In addition, it is serving those choosing to step away from potentially destructive situations with a safe, high quality learning environment. We are, however, concerned about the experiences and outcomes of those we are not hearing

from. In particular, what were the experiences of students who attended but did not complete high school at Mt. Edgecumbe? Are their experiences and perceptions significantly different from the graduates in our study? More exploration is needed with the alumni our study may have missed to truly understand the scope of the experiences of all students at Mt. Edgecumbe High School, and the impacts it has on their lives.

Our research brings us a step closer to developing a well-rounded picture of the experiences of rural and Alaska Native students who are leaving their home communities to attend Mt. Edgecumbe, and why they are choosing to go. Our hope is that this research will help policy makers and Alaska Native education leaders make informed decisions regarding Alaska Native education options and rural secondary school alternatives across Alaska. By understanding what makes Mt. Edgecumbe High School work for many students, but not for others, and why some students opt to leave home and attend Mt. Edgecumbe while others do not, educators may have a better understanding of “what works” in educating Alaska Native and rural Alaska students, whether in local or residential schools. We hope these findings will encourage Alaska education policymakers to take not just the economic costs and benefits of state-funded boarding schools into account, but the social costs and benefits as well.

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Appendix A
Zoomerang Survey Results: Closed ended questions

We would like to ask you some questions about when you attended Mt. Edgecumbe High School, and why you chose to go there.

2. Did you attend another high school before attending Mt. Edgecumbe High School?

Yes	82	51%
No	80	49%
Total	162	100%

3. For which academic school year(s) did you attend Mt. Edgecumbe High School? Please select all that apply:

1985/86	8	5%
1986/87	17	10%
1987/88	19	12%
1988/89	20	12%
1989/90	24	15%
1990/91	22	13%
1991/92	26	16%
1992/93	28	17%
1993/94	34	21%
1994/95	33	20%
1995/96	36	22%
1996/97	33	20%
1997/98	28	17%
1998/99	19	12%
1999/2000	30	18%
2000/01	37	23%
2001/02	35	21%
2002/03	38	23%
2003/04	20	12%
2004/05	14	9%
2005/06	9	5%

4. Were you a day student?		
Yes	35	22%
No	124	78%
Total	159	100%

5. What year did you graduate from Mt. Edgecumbe High School?		
1986	2	1%
1987	2	1%
1988	3	2%
1989	6	4%
1990	11	7%
1991	8	5%
1992	6	4%
1993	6	4%
1994	9	5%
1995	14	9%
1996	7	4%
1997	9	5%
1998	13	8%
1999	7	4%
2000	5	3%
2001	6	4%
2002	9	5%
2003	17	10%
2004	7	4%
2005	7	4%
2006	10	6%
Total	164	100%

6. How did you hear about Mt. Edgecumbe High School? Please select all that apply:

From a family member	122	74%
From a friend	62	38%
From a community member	26	16%
From a school counselor	15	9%
From a teacher or mentor	28	17%
From a Mt. Edgecumbe High School instructor	4	2%
From a Mt. Edgecumbe High School sports coach	3	2%
Other, please explain:	20	12%

7. Why did you choose to attend Mt. Edgecumbe High School? Please select all that apply:

Higher quality of education	135	82%
Family members attended	96	59%
Community members attended	29	18%
High school not offered in home community	14	9%
Extra-curricular activities offered at MEHS that were not offered in home community	64	39%
Discrimination in home community	18	11%
Issues in home community (be sure to answer question 8)	26	16%
Difficulties in home life (be sure to answer question 9)	19	12%
Other, please specify:	23	14%

For each of the following family members, we would like to know whether they attended Mt. Edgecumbe High School and if they influenced your decision to attend.

10. Your mother

Neither attended nor influenced your decision	23	14%
Did not attend	75	46%
Did attend	36	22%
Did not influence your decision	18	11%
Did influence your decision (how?):	68	42%

11. Your father

Neither attended nor influenced your decision	27	17%
Did not attend	72	45%
Did attend	43	27%
Did not influence your decision	24	15%
Did influence your decision (how?):	52	32%

12. One or more of your siblings

Neither attended nor influenced your decision	30	19%
Did not attend	37	23%
Did attend	81	50%
Did not influence your decision	22	14%
Did influence your decision (how?):	39	24%

13. One or more of your cousins

Neither attended nor influenced your decision	31	19%
Did not attend	36	22%
Did attend	81	49%
Did not influence your decision	31	19%
Did influence your decision (how?):	25	15%

14. One or more of your aunts

Neither attended nor influenced your decision	41	25%
Did not attend	45	27%
Did attend	64	39%
Did not influence your decision	28	17%
Did influence your decision (how?):	8	5%

15. One or more of your uncles		
Neither attended nor influenced your decision	41	25%
Did not attend	50	31%
Did attend	58	36%
Did not influence your decision	31	19%
Did influence your decision (how?):	6	4%

16. One or more of your grandparents		
Neither attended nor influenced your decision	56	34%
Did not attend	80	49%
Did attend	17	10%
Did not influence your decision	19	12%
Did influence your decision (how?):	7	4%

The next set of questions is about your experiences at Mt. Edgecumbe High School.

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Very Poor	Poor	Fair
Development of academic learning skills	0 0%	0 0%	4 2%
Teaching you about your culture	20 12%	29 18%	63 39%
Teaching you about other cultures	0 0%	6 4%	31 19%
Development of career or employment skills	3 2%	7 4%	27 17%
Development of independent living skills	2 1%	5 3%	10 6%

19. Were you involved in any extra-curricular or recreational activities offered through the school while attending Mt. Edgecumbe High School? Please check all that apply:

Basketball	72	45%
Cheerleading	21	13%
Cross Country Running	57	36%
Drama, Debate & Forensics	26	16%
Music Program	24	15%
Student Government	60	38%
Track & Field	14	9%
Volleyball	51	32%
World Language	50	31%
Wrestling	35	22%
Baseball	6	4%
Washington, D.C. Close Up	29	18%
Alaska Close Up	30	19%
Cultural Clubs (e.g. Japan, China, Russia)	45	28%
Native Youth Olympics	31	19%
National Honor Society	73	46%
Future Teachers of Alaska	38	24%
Scuba Club	13	8%
Yearbook	41	26%
PILARS	9	6%
Karate	8	5%
L.E.A.D.S.	20	12%
Art Club	4	2%
Channel Light	57	36%
Alaska Native Dance Groups	59	37%
MEAYEA	0	0%
Other, please specify	43	27%

22. Did you receive any college credit while attending Mt. Edgecumbe High School?

Yes	125	77%
No	37	23%
Total	162	100%

23. If yes, from which institution?

Sheldon Jackson College	14	11%
University of Alaska Southeast	121	95%
Other, please specify:	7	5%

24. When you first arrived at Mt. Edgecumbe High School, about how many other students did you already know?

None	20	12%
1 to 5	88	54%
6 to 10	27	17%
More than 10	28	17%
Total	163	100%

We would now like to ask you questions about your life after graduating from Mt. Edgecumbe High School.

25. Which of the following did you do within one year of graduation? Please select all that apply:

Began attending college in Alaska	77	47%
Began attending college outside of Alaska	46	28%
Began vocational training	9	5%
Completed vocational training	6	4%
Got married	5	3%
Had a child	14	9%
Began work	80	49%
Unemployed and looking for work (longer than 2 months)	6	4%
Joined the military	9	5%
Completed basic and advanced individual training in the military	6	4%
Other, please specify:	14	9%

26. Which of the following did you do within three years of graduation? Please select all that apply:

Began attending college in Alaska	61	40%
Began attending college outside of Alaska	27	18%
Graduated from college	4	3%
Began vocational training	8	5%
Completed vocational training	9	6%
Got married	19	12%
Had a child	29	19%
Began work	79	52%
Unemployed and looking for work (longer than 2 months)	3	2%
Joined the military	3	2%
Completed basic and advanced individual training in the military	4	3%
Other, please specify:	37	24%

27. Which of the following did you do within five years of graduation? Please select all that apply:

Began attending college in Alaska	39	27%
Began attending college outside of Alaska	18	12%
Graduated from college	39	27%
Began vocational training	6	4%
Completed vocational training	10	7%
Got married	20	14%
Had a child	34	23%
Began work	78	54%
Unemployed and looking for work (longer than 2 months)	6	4%
Joined the military	1	1%
Completed basic and advanced individual training in the military	1	1%
Other, please specify:	36	25%

28. Did you return to your home community after graduating from high school?

Yes	98	60%
No	65	40%
Total	163	100%

29. If yes, when did you return to your home community?

Within 1 year	79	77%
Within 5 years	16	16%
Within 10 years	7	7%
After more than 10 years	1	1%
Total	103	100%

30. If yes, you returned to your home community, for how long did you remain there?

Less than 1 year	52	51%
1-2 years	9	9%
3-5 years	15	15%
More than 5 years	26	25%
Total	102	100%

31. Did you move outside of Alaska after graduating from high school?

Yes	61	38%
No	101	62%
Total	162	100%

32. If yes, when did you leave Alaska?

Within 1 year	44	67%
Within 5 years	15	23%
Within 10 years	5	8%
After more than 10 years	2	3%
Total	66	100%

33. If yes, for how long did you remain outside of Alaska?

Less than 1 year	16	24%
1-2 years	16	24%
3-5 years	15	22%
More than 5 years	5	7%
Still outside	15	22%
Total	67	100%

34. Do you currently live in Alaska?.

Yes	142	87%
No	18	11%

36. Have you held any leadership positions since graduating from high school?

Yes	79	48%
No	84	52%
Total	163	100%

37. If yes, what type? Please select all that apply:

Tribal	23	29%
Government	14	18%
Business	22	28%
Civic	15	19%
Other, please explain:	46	58%

The next set of questions are open-ended questions about your experiences and outcomes as a graduate of Mt. Edgecumbe High School.

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Very Poor	Poor	Fair
Your overall educational experience	0 0%	0 0%	5 3%
Your overall residential life experience	4 2%	10 6%	25 15%
Your overall experience	0 0%	2 1%	9 6%

43. Would you recommend Mt. Edgecumbe High School to youth in your home community?

Yes	152	96%
No	6	4%
Total	158	100%

44. Would you recommend Mt. Edgecumbe High School to your own children?

Yes	125	80%
No	31	20%
Total	156	100%

The last few questions are about you.

47. What is your gender?

Male	45	28%
Female	118	72%
Total	163	100%

48. What is your ethnicity? Please select all that apply:

White	49	30%
Black or African American	2	1%
Asian	2	1%
American Indian	4	2%
Alaska Native	144	88%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	1	1%
Other, please specify	8	5%

50. Are you an ANCSA shareholder?

Yes	78	48%
No	84	52%
Total	162	100%

51. What is your marital status?

Single	53	32%
Married	74	45%
Long-term relationship	31	19%
Separated	1	1%
Divorced	5	3%
Widowed	0	0%
Total	164	100%

52. Do you have children?

No	65	40%
Yes	95	58%

53. What is the highest level of education you have achieved?

High School Graduate	14	9%
Some college	67	41%
Associate's Degree	11	7%
Bachelor's Degree	40	24%
Graduate or Professional Degree	18	11%
Postsecondary vocational training, please specify:	14	9%
Total	164	100%

54. What is your current employment status?

Working full-time for wages	110	67%
Working part-time for wages	9	5%
Unemployed and looking for work	4	2%
Unemployed and not looking for work	5	3%
Student	24	15%
Self-employed	3	2%
Home worker	6	4%
Subsistence	2	1%
Retired	1	1%
Total	164	100%

Appendix B: Open Ended Questions

Question 41: How could the residential life experience at Mt. Edgecumbe High School be improved? Please explain:

"I am not sure how it is anymore, but from my freshman year to my sophomore year the rules had gotten considerably more and more strict each school year. When I left, the Dorm principal was a person who was only there to punish the students it seemed. She was not there to BE THERE for the students, rather to be in a position of control.

The ""check-out"" situation is much too strict. I think as long as students' parents give the OK for a family member to check them out for the night/weekend it should be okay. It was okay my freshman year, but by my senior year they had to be at least 21 and pretty much parents only."

Fair punishment to everyone. I noticed popular students got away with more.

I had no problems with it.

Better kitchen facilities in the old dorm. More activities in the dorm at the beginning of school year, intramurals, etc to help with homesickness and adaptation.

What could improve the dorm life? In retrospect, No MTV or commercial cable TV of any sort. Only educational television. And plenty of foreign language channels. Also, continual bombardment from a yet to be invented Native television cable feed. It would seem as much fun at the time, but it would be much more wholesome.

Looking back, during the times I attended MEHS, the resident life was not that bad. The "old girls dorm" was kind of crowded at first. I would have definitely added more phones, and more computer access in the dorms.

Not sure. NO way the students are going to get their own rooms. Personal space is important but I do not know how that would work.

Better kitchens for cooking. Newer residential dorms.

The 10-11 pm hour was very difficult to live with because I was still ready to stay awake. I would encourage allowing students to read in bed, door open, for a half hour just to mellow out. I don't know the rules nowadays but a strict and immediate lights out didn't work for me.

An honor dorm for the boys is needed.

I thought it was good when I was there.

It worked out the way it did. I cannot see any room for improvement.

No improvements needed.

Nicer dorms.

Renovate Main girls Dorm. Get new furniture for main girls dorm.

More group activities during the weekends, besides movies in the sub.

From what I have seen in my own years at Mt. Edgecumbe--the dorm principal is what holds it all together. Having an employee such as John DeLong work there was perfect because he had knowledge of the school, and treated students fairly. He knew how to handle people; both students and staff. Other dorm principals that have come and gone at Mt. Edgecumbe have lacked what he had, and made the experience bad for everyone.

No recommendations at this time.

I'm not sure what has changed since my day, but when I left, more rooms, and a softer atmosphere would have been nice.

Not sure. It has changes a lot since I attended. Change it back to Native only.

Get a handle on students' interaction with one another.

More of an honor system to give students opportunities to do other things based on their behavior, instead of keeping things strict for everyone.

Healthier food

Same, its' been too long. I don't currently know what the residential life is like at MEHS.

Like the education, I think every year was an improvement. Just as life, you live and you learn. MEHS strives for quality. I still couldn't believe they renovated the old auditorium as dorms. We would have loved that.

More culture.

give good kids more rewards/freedom than the bad kids

Harassment issues need more serious responses.

More social activities as a group held in the dorms. That would have forced me to be more social with other girls outside of my immediate circle of friends.

FOOD!!! Get some native food for the native kids

build more dorms

Maybe younger RA's??

"it is number one to become independent

"

Make all the rooms smaller with only two people per room, more kitchens, more phones, boys and girls dorms not so close to each other, dorm aides who are younger than 60 that know more about the generation they are caretakers for.

There should be a cap of only 4 to a room in the older dormitory rooms and 2 to a room in a pod in the newer dormitory rooms any more than that there is going to be social problems among students.

Perhaps not so rigid regarding the upper class students - this would help once the student graduates and is on his or her own.

No improvement. Everything was good living in the dorms.

Consistent application of the rules; a return to the emphasis on respect, tradition, and what it means to be an Edgecumbe Student.

Stop the hazing. I heard of it happening around the boys AND girls that do attend there.

It can have a few changes. I really can't remember it's been three years since I graduated.

Better facilities and interactive positive programs.

my senior year there seemed to be an extreme lack of privacy, but I don't know how all of that can be arranged. there also seemed to be an added abundance of rules, most of which were unnecessary

After school driving lessons. I understand there would be high risks and insurance liabilities but it would make for an overall well rounded education for life. Possibly cooking classes held in the evenings on campus. I still don't have a variety of cooking skills. I think cooking classes would be fun to take after school or in the evenings after quiet hour.

Get TV's in the rooms and let kids sleep in on weekends. and if students are sick let them stay in their own rooms, not in a room with other sick people

It was good when I was there. I didn't have any qualms.

It was well enough off when I left. Just keep the rules from being too strict and kids seem less likely to keep getting into trouble.

The dorms need new furniture and color!

Get more dorms so the students won't be like sardines stuffed into the little rooms with little space.

better food

They need to pay the DJ more money for the Dances. He barely makes enough to maintain the equipment.

improved dorm living quarters,

I enjoyed living in the dormitory (especially Heritage Hall)

Already at its best

More space, when I was in school, there were up to 6 girls per room!

More tolerance, at the very least from the staff (not sure how you can impose these values on the students) for diversity- not just in cultural heritage but in terms of thoughts/beliefs too. Ease up on the religious tensions.

As I recall, the shower facilities in the men's dorm could have used a little renovation.

same as above - home ec also, mechanics, etc. I don't think that was offered when I was there. But...these are skills (cooking, sewing) that are probably taught by most mothers that weren't taught when I was there. I think there should be a balance in everyone's life.

The level system when I was there was stupid. Allow students to work off campus. Some of the Dorm Aides were not very good. The better dorm aides when I was there should have been better compensated, e.g. Tim Kingwell.

it's already pretty good

Better facilities and a greater emphasis on respecting others and pride in taking care of what you have.

too strict. it shouldn't have to be too strict.

More strict at times and less free time to get into trouble.

I don't know how it is now, but then, the dorms were too cold and theft was a concern

Provide more culturally relevant after school activities.

open more rooms, 5 people to a room is a little much.

The food at the cafeteria could be better. Either they serve better food or the school should have a different contractor.

I enjoyed the dorm life. I think that if the kids that attend MEHS now, knew the rules that we had when I was in school, they would not be happy.

First and foremost, the food could be better. The "French Fry" should be opened back up for people who like to run it. Town leave could be at least half an hour longer.

More updated dorms.

Most likely it already has in the 17 yrs since I graduated

I think that hiring staff that are actually qualified to deal with teenage people who are homesick and not used to crazy rules would help a lot. Also, being more lenient toward minor infractions would make life a lot less miserable. When on restriction it is impossible to take a nap during the day since the students get another day if they fail to sign in every 30 minutes. That is pretty ridiculous, if you ask me.

Bigger dorms for the girls.

"less strict rules and the demerit system could be less strict, but other than that it was great"

More funding for more buildings/rooms.

I've heard there have been many changes to the residential surrounding since I've graduated. Most of them being what I would have liked to have changed.

I think what they are doing is already awesome!

mass renovation of residential units

Again, cut down on the size of the students enrolled.

I believe that another lounge in the boys dorm on one or both floors with one or more computers and tvs couches would be a fun hang out place.

Encourage dorm clubs, not just in school clubs, that explore the realm of politics and socioeconomics.

n/a (Graduate in 1995, so I don't know what can be improved know, it was a great experience when I was a student there)

I think residential life at MEHS would have been better if the dorm aides and other employees would not have been so quick to judge students based on the company they kept.

It may be good to allow students to have some type of calling card to call home once in a while so they don't get homesick. Have group events in the commons area during holiday's so no one is left out and feels sad...leading to depression...etc.

Have dorm aides that get involved in the children's lives and be that extended parent. Check to see if the child is doing good in school or if they need someone to talk to. Teenage years are crucial for psychological development and no matter how tough a child thinks they are they need an adult to talk to for advice. There needs to be more communication for students.

Allow Students to have a car even if they have to live on campus, most Teens who do well in school, can have the ability to drive a car, but regulate the terms of use students to have acceptable grades in order to obtain keys to said Ride, if provided by parents, or purchased on the students own

Loved the way the MEHS community felt like a family.

all was good. no need to change it.

Again, I have lived in many communal living situations and my fondest memories and most pleasant experiences are of my high school days, and nights:)

Perhaps supplying toiletries such as toothpaste or laundry soap to those less fortunate. My family was poor and I know how hard it was to provide my own sometimes. I will always remember how one dorm aide offered to buy me soap.

was very good when I attended, no need for change

Stop the harassing of other students. I understand teenagers are going to argue and sometimes not get along especially when they are being forced to live with one another, but when words turn into actions something has to stop and someone needs to protect those students. I saw so many talented people leave school because they didn't feel accepted or were contently picked on or were tormented by others.

Better private areas for phones in the main girls dorm. Instead of the phones hanging in the hallways. We had to stand in the hallway and hold a finger to your ear while girls are yelling down the hallways at each other.

Continue to allow boys to live in the 'New/Honor Dorm'. I would have considered not going back if I was not allowed to live in that dormitory. It was a COMPLETELY different experience than the old dorm, and a positive difference.

New dorms

The food could be more healthy.

Like I said, provide more staff support by hiring more staff. Or bring the population of accepted students back down. The whole family-away-from-home atmosphere has been obliterated, students feel like a burden and find it hard to connect with staff members or so my sister. She is currently attending.

Please hire certified caretakers. Inform parents of corrective actions taken against students immediately.

When I was there it was split between Honor Dorm and the regular dorm setting and you couldn't move to Honor dorm unless a spot came open - which never happened often. I was lucky that a bunch of girls got into trouble early and was moved to Honor Dorm quickly. However, for those girls who had the behavior, maturity, grades, etc. to be in Honor Dorm but never got the perks or had to wait a really long time to be moved, that was somewhat unfair. Maybe some sort of merit system for individuals rather than a space-available situation would be more incentive than waiting for a space to open up would be better. A lot of girls gave up waiting and just figured "why bother?" because they knew their chances were slim.

Newer and more improved dorms. There was asbestos at the gym and at the dorms, so I am sure that there will be long term issues for the teachers and students.

Renovate the main dorm, take greater action against student theft, harassment, etc. other than: "I'm sorry, but unless they admit to stealing ----, I can't do anything about it."

It was difficult the first year as I was not used to being so far from family and friends. Providing additional supports to students from small communities would be helpful.

My concerns are how the school is handling issues that youths are facing within the age range such as sexuality, drugs, alcohol, etc. If a child is to live away from home I think it is important to help them develop tools to navigate the real world...for example, how to deal with issues, how to communicate, how to handle emotions and building self esteem.

Although I resided in a co-ed dormitory, I now feel that this is inappropriate. When I attended Edgecumbe, this dormitory was a privilege. This undermines the morality of students within Mt. Edgecumbe's care.

Build more dorms to hold more students. But then again, you would lose the teacher/student ratio.

There should be no talking down on staff in front of students.

There is too much "babysitting". It gets overwhelming at times. I know they are only doing their job and there to help, but administration should really look into that. School is great, but dorms are not.

Improvements made to the dormitories.

I understand there were old dorm buildings that were off limits but were not torn down. Students entered these old dorms and supposedly asbestos was an issue. I hear that a couple or few students later developed serious health issues. Not sure it was because of this. But health/safety should be given more focus. Also, the food at the cafeteria was very unhealthy. It would be nice if they offered more health conscientious and organic options for students.

It was perfectly fine I thought.

From talking to my brother, I understand that as much as I loved living in the girls' dorms, for the boys, a lot of it was like the things he and I have seen inmates do to one another during our correctional careers. Possibly a more family-like housing program could help.

Continue to reward good behavior and the opposite for those who show bad behavior.

I liked it. It was challenging and we had to learn to respect and live with each other.

No roommates although highly unlikely, don't stick clean people with messy people its unfair I KNOW THIS

I have no idea. It was hard to live with a bunch of teenagers.

I did not mind living in the dorms, it really prepared me for college life.

If they haven't done already, new main dormitories should be built. The dorm staff have always tried to make the students a safe environment to live in.

Younger dorm maids.

The only real bad experience I had with the Dorm Aides had to do with Head Dorm Aide, Mrs. Littlefield. She did not like me as a person because of some bad choices I made a Freshman and during my Senior Year when my mother came to visit me, she made some untimely comments towards me and when she realized my mom was there acted like I was her favorite person in the world. I guess what I am trying to say is that although students need structure in their lives to keep them on track, so do the Dorm Aides need better supervision so that students who aren't on their "favorites" list aren't treated badly for no reason.

Maybe the facilities could improve.

TV computers in the rooms

Everything was perfect the way it was.

it was fun

Not sure how things are run now. Gill Truit was influential on dorm life. When students got in trouble he would pull them in his office and hear their side of the story.

Question 42: Which had more influence in your life and/or career: the social connections made or the educational experience at Mt. Edgecumbe High School? Please explain:

Both. (11 responses)

Anyone who graduates from MEHS cannot deny their social relations that they developed at MEHS - they run deep and are very powerful. However strong those relationships were for me, the educational opportunities that MEHS provided far exceeded the impact social relations have had (so far).

As of right now, I took a year off from school, going on two, so at this point in my life I would have to say my social connections, but as soon as I start school again, things might change.

Both educationally and socially, I benefited from MEHS. I feel that my teachers in all classes taught me well. I really liked their teaching methods and materials used to learn. The social life also helped me to make an easy transition into college. I attended UAF the fall right after graduating from MEHS. I felt prepared when I started college, thanks to MEHS.

both equally. Although I have not yet earned my degree, MEHS has definitely put me at an advantage at my occupation.

Both equally. The friends I made are lifelong, and the same goes for the education I got. I am still in touch with the friends I made in high school and we still talk about things we learned, teachers or experiences we had 10+ years ago.

Both equally. The social connections I made and the education I got both last a lifetime. both got stronger at MEHS. kids in my hometown don't know how to make a resume or dress for an interview

Both had influenced me in different ways.

Both have had a huge influence in my life. They go hand in hand. Little did we know back when we were at MEHS that we were developing an amazing network across Alaska. Both my educational experience and connections from MEHS have served me well and come in handy time and time again.

both have had an equal impact

Both influenced my life, I have life long friends whom I still interact with and the educational experience helped me with my career since Mt. Edgecumbe High School is the best school in Alaska.

Both of the social and education experiences influenced life and career

Both of the social skills and the education made a good impact in after MEHS. I was able to speak up to a huge crowd on behalf of my job. Most people in the communities recognized that I came from a good school as soon as I fell into that job, especially seeing my age at a Tribal Council, and got that promotion for the Environmental Fields and a Grant Writer. I thought it was awesome to think that I should thank MEHS a whole lot.

Both played a role in my life and career, but I would have to say the social connections played a larger role. There were few individuals that I could relate with and talk to about real issues we face in our society today. The feelings and beliefs I walked away with from this put pressure on me to 1.) Get away from these issues and 2.) Get an education to keep myself away from these issues. Issues = drugs, violence, hatred and discrimination on all levels.

Both social and educational experiences helped me out tremendously! I graduated from MEHS a confident person, and I consider myself very successful in achieving my own goals.

Both, I am in positions that I need to have a strong educational background and the personal connections. In Alaska it so small that relationships really do count!

Both, I made many friends and the quality of education has made me a better person, worker, and community member.

Both, I not only received a great education and stepping stones to attend college but the determination to get out of Alaska and see the world.

Both, not only was the social connections amazing, but the educational experience was great as well.

Both, they were pretty balanced for me, but the connections I made there will last a lifetime.

Both, with the social connections I made at MEHS, I was able to connect with a lot of important people and the educational experience got me a long way! I graduated with an Associate's Degree and I will be graduating with my Bachelor's Degree next year.

Both. But MEHS definitely shaped me into the person that I am in a lot of ways.

Both. Learning to connect with people you don't know and also live with them. Plus the quality education that was received there.

Both. The social experiences at MEHS allowed me to develop a certain level of tolerance of those I "socially" did not agree w/. the educational experience, on the other hand, afforded me a high level of education unique to MEHS.

Both. Although probably only two people still know where I'm at in this world today, the social connections I made are still there. You can't go anywhere in Anchorage, or Alaska without seeing someone you know. And the educational experience, well I don't think I would have made it through college without some of the invaluable skills I learned there, note taking, writing, using computers, and the college level math and science. You really learned how to learn and think.

Both. Edgecumbe provides both and that's about it. I have made, truly, life-long friends during my stay at the school and also Edgecumbe, or rather Ms. McCrossin provided me the tools and the motivation to pursue my career goal as a journalist. So I can not with sound mind weigh one against the other. Both the social and educational experiences I had at Edgecumbe influenced, impacted, drove my life forward.

Both. Educational benefited me in regard to college, and the social connections are still benefiting me in my career and also the encouragement to go out and do what I'm doing from my social group.

Both-I came from a one room school to MEHS. I was able to participate in classes and activities that I would otherwise not have been able to. I think of my friends that I made at MEHS as family, because we spent so much time together.

Educational experience (9 responses)

DEFINITELY EDUCATIONAL! My school at home did not offer which I learned at MEHS, not by any comparison. I even had the encouragement to want to further my education.

Definitely the educational experience. Like I said, they had the best education possible for me to obtain. Social connections have played a huge role in my life also, but hindered some people in the same way. Today I see my classmates only hanging out with the people they went to high school with. They have a hard time going out and meeting new people. This causes me to have different "cliques" of people. I have my work friends, my MEHS friends, my college friends, and then my friends from my hometown. People in the MEHS group tend not to mix and mingle either.

Education experience for sure, If I didn't attend MEHS I wouldn't have been prepared for college. Thanks to Ms. Mac the English teacher

education I wanted to learn more

educational experience - I haven't really kept in touch with social connections that I had in high school. It is great to hear from everyone, but seems like after leaving school didn't hear much from anyone other than my closest friends. I suppose that that is a downside of leaving home for school. You might lose the opportunity for connection with members in your own village.

Educational experience and social. Made many friends and learned things I never knew prior to attending.

Educational experience had more influence because social connections were still undeveloped. I concentrated more on important social connections in college than I did in high school.

Educational experience it helped me be ready for the real world where my social connections encouraged me.

Educational experience which is the main reason I went there. Then followed with social as it just went hand in hand.

Educational experience, definitely. I have a lot of long time friends from Mt. Edgecumbe but it was not those connections that have brought me to where I am today--it was the educational experience! It prepared me early on for life in general.

Educational experience, taught me to study away from home, and stay focused

Educational experience. At [village] I was the only 9th, 10th and 11th grader. It was new to me to learn with a bunch of people.

Educational experience. I had a small group of close friends, and while most were nice, I wasn't impressed with most of the students. I was more interested in my friends and getting good grades and getting out.

educational experience. I went more farther than I could have if I went to the village.

Educational experience. The high level of demand from the teaching staff helped me become very independent and forward thinking individual which resulted in my success in college and in my career in the Business Administration field.

Educational experience. When I graduated I didn't see or stay in contact much with my classmates. Although, we've been running into each other at ANMC Ortho! Social connections taught me how to interact/deal with other cultures and personalities

educational experience. I realized how important it was to do good in high school.

Educational experience. With the educational experience I'm including the activities that made me more cultured that were not offered in Buckland. For instance, Mr. Stein and his Pac Rim Studies/Japanese/Chinese Classes, Ms. Campen's knowledge of Alaskan Issues and its' history, Ms. Mac's ability to push a writer to perfection. DC Close-up trips, and FTA trips were also educational and unique to MEHS. College visitations with the Inupiaq Dance group (Michigan 2001).

Educational experiences - I don't think if I had remained in school in Anchorage I would have been as prepared to live on my own as I was once I graduated and started my own family.

Educational experiences and social experiences played a key role in my life..

educational, prepared me for college

Educational. Knowledge will go a long way in a career and life in general. Its a big world. The more you know the better!

Educational. The computer classes helped me get this job.

Hard to say- Education gave me tools to further my education and career, while the social network definitely has helped through the years as well, I guess without the education I would not be as successful as I am now.

Hmm, I don't have an answer, both simultaneously apply. I was socially successful, therefore academically able to perform. It wouldn't have happened if I were isolated.

Hmmm...that's difficult to answer since both have influenced my life tremendously. If I had to choose, I would choose socially by a slight margin.

I believe it was a combination of both. During the first year the school reopened it was, at times, chaotic and there were students with issues (suicide attempts, alcohol/drug abuse, etc.). As the year progressed those issues were not present as the students were given help or sent home. Personally, the friendships I made were valuable and have been long lasting. When I see a fellow MEHS student it is like seeing family. The educational experience provided an opportunity and fostered a desire to know more.

I cannot say that either influenced my life more than the other.

I don't think one has a preference over the other. Both experiences have been a benefit to my life. The social connections have taught me how to interact with people in close spaces, which made boot camp that much easier for me to bare. And the education that I received, especially Mrs. Mac Crossins English II, has helped me in more ways than 1 over all the years that I have been in High School till now.

I feel that just moving away from home living on campus prepared me for 50 % of my college pains.

I feel that the educational experience has helped me more. I worked hard in high school which helped me to work hard in college. And I am close to graduating. Was not very social I don't think.

I feel they both fell hand-in-hand with each other. Learning to manage personal time and networking skills.

I have been equally impacted--see above.

I have greatly advanced in my life from both aspects mentioned above. I think that the social connections that I have made at MEHS impacts my daily life both personally and professionally.

I have maintained no social connections. However, Mt. Edgecumbe provided an adequate end to my high school years when compared to the substandard education provided in [village].

I made great friends in Edgecumbe, but I believe that the knowledge I gained from there has helped me be more successful.

I not only have friends from the Bethel area, But from all over the state of Alaska. The educational experience that I learned from MEHS has helped me get a job right after graduating. I haven't left my job since.

I think a mixture of both. I was able to be socially connected with many people at MEHS which improved my social skills which has open the door for more opportunities in my life in many different aspects, such as my current employment and my ability to effectively communicate and provide case management to the elders. I also have excelled in college and have acquired nearly 100 credits at UAA. Although I have not graduated yet, I believe MEHS's educational experience has allowed me to excel in the college field.

I think both made a difference in life because I am able to communicate with more people and I learned a lot more than I would learn here in [village].

I think it was the social connections. Before I attended MEHS I was a quiet shy person. Being around many other students from all over Alaska made me speak more and interacted with my peers.

I think that the social connections had more influence on my life because every town or village that I go to, I know someone who either went to Mt. Edgecumbe with me or knew a person that I attended school with.

I think they both had the same influence

I think they were both equally influential. I learned to live on my own and I gained an academic understanding of the "real" world vs. village living.

I would have to say both. If it weren't for the social connections, I may not have made it educationally. Everyone is going through the same things that we were. IT made it a lot easier because of that.

I would have to say the educational experience, even though exposure to families all across Alaska is great, I know that my public speaking and writing skills have taken me far.

I would have to say the Social connections.. Everyone always knows somebody...

I would have to say the social experience influenced me more although the educational experience was very good.

I would say both have influenced nearly equally

I would say both, if I had to choose between the two I would say the social connections. It breaks the ice in new settings and provides a strong social web to fall back on.

I would say the educational experiences, yet while I was there I was not aware of it. During tough times in college I fell back on a lot of the academic skills I learned from the teachers there. I think it's important that MEHS obtains and keeps the best teachers.

I would say the social aspect of it all because it still incorporates the educational experiences, we learned to work, live and grow together in a healthy community and many connections to friends are still strong.

I'd say that I can go into Anchorage and run into someone that I know everyday from MEHS. I loved getting to know so many people from all over Alaska. I actually got my first job outta high school through a friend from h.s. The education given at MEHS was good that it prepared me for college when I did go and that I learned more than just the basics. It also was easy to be away from home because I had done it for so many years already.

Independent living experience helped me in my life. My writing skills and cultural knowledge helped in my career as a Juvenile Justice Officer. Connections made with fellow students gave me a life time of friends.

It made me open out of my shell and catered to my strengths.

It's really hard to say. When I lived in Anchorage and ran into fellow classmates, I felt an instant kinship. I think that the experience has a tendency to "bond" for life. It's important to build those type of relationships. And on the other hand, the knowledge and skills I gained from MEHS were invaluable when I went out into the "real" world on my own. If I had to pick one it would be the educational experience. The introduction to the positive mental attitude made a huge difference in how I started looking at that world. And the Total Quality Management thinking really provided an advantage because it was

a different way of thinking...many people my age (as a recent high school graduate) did not think in that way.

Just being independent, made me realize I create my own path in life and it is up to me if I wanted a good life or not. I'm glad I picked the high road :)

Life, because I have learned what it is like with out parents. Having to know how to deal with homework without being told to do it.

Make me a very independent person and I knew there was way more out there in life than just what I see around me.

meeting new people

My Russian teacher, Professor Mikolas Bekeris a well as the English/Journalism teacher Kathleen McCrossin.

social connection now I know lots of people where ever I go in Alaska.

social connection seemed to be the best I got, I mean the work that I have found and socializing skills I developed while there helped me out a lot.

Social connections (4 responses)

Social connections helped me network into new careers.

Social Connections to help me stay in line. Educational Experience had advanced classes that helped me also.

Social connections. I still know quite a few Edgecumbos to this day.

Social, I've made a few lifelong friends I may never have met otherwise, since we all chose different career paths

Social. The network connections I developed while at MEHS have benefited me tremendously.

The Education. Graduating from MEHS with good grades really opened the door for scholarship opportunities. If I hadn't received the scholarships I did, I wouldn't have been able to attend college. If I had attended any other HS I probably wouldn't have done as well in HS or attended college. The teachers were all supportive, informative and determined to help students further their education after HS.

The educational experience at MEHS had more of an influence on my life because it prepared me for college in a way the Fort Yukon School never could. It even made me confident enough to go to school out of state.

The educational experience at Mt. Edgecumbe. I do not have much contact with peers that I graduated with. Perhaps if I were in a different field this would be different as well.

The educational experience because I still use the skills that I learnt from there I still used.

The educational experience because it prepared me to do my homework on the subject beforehand. Much is accomplished in this way.

The educational experience by far. Maybe in the 1960's making social connections at MEHS was beneficial but those days are so far gone. Not too many of the students I attended with are in any positions of power, influence or control and most have gone back to their village so there was little benefit in that way. My educational experience has been so important to where I am today because it prepared me for college academically as well as socially. I needed to prove to myself that I could live outside Tanana and once that happened I knew I was going to graduate from college.

The educational experience definitely set me up for success in college and in my career. Without the social connections I am not sure I would have the personality that allows me to be successful in Fire/EMS.

The educational experience gained at Mt. Edgecumbe was definitely a factor in shaping my career. The people I know from HS have been pretty much useless to me when it comes to me getting a job - its not like we have some sort of good ol' boy network, unless there is one and I am on the outside of it.

The educational experience had a big impact on me. I realized that the one on one contact with teachers and the access to them had a big difference in my education and helped me to realize that the low student to teacher aspect makes learning easier than having 25-30 students in a class.

The educational experience had more influence on me. Many of the social connections ended the day of graduation.

The educational experience had the most influence

The educational experience has made more of a difference. Living in SE Alaska, I have not much benefited from the social connections as there were few of us who attended from SE.

The educational experience influenced my career by getting me academically ready for college.

The educational experience was definitely more influential. If I had stayed at Sitka High School I would have surely flunked out. Instead I made the MEHS basketball team

(which encouraged me to keep my grades up), and found a superior mentor in Mr. Ray Stein. The social connections cannot be ignored though. It is an amazing feeling to be in any community in Alaska and know someone. I feel I could strike up a conversation with anyone in Alaska because of this.

The educational experience, it helped me prepare to succeed in college.

The educational experience. I am just now getting back in contact with old classmates. MEHS prepared me for life, for business, for success.

The educational experience. I'm not a genius but I believe the quality of education at MEHS far exceeds that of anything here in interior Alaska.

The educational experience. My first year of college, I took 21 credits per quarter and got straight A's, largely due to the work ethic and education that I got at MEHS. That said, I still do have close friends from MEHS that I still see and communicate with.

The educational experience. While I did make many friends at school and I still run into them from time to time, I use the skills the teachers taught me almost everyday in my work and personal life.

The educational experience. By the end of the 4 years spent there I had learned so much and I've been able to apply that knowledge to college and life in general.

The educational experiences has made more influences in my life. The writing skills and leadership roles in the educational setting had encouraged me to move from a follower role to strive to be a leader. The tools of the educational experience encouraged me to want more and to reach for jobs and degrees that before I thought were unattainable to me. The educational staff that was there at MEHS when I attended were the elite and they understood what needed to be done to educate students to the highest quality of education. They did what worked and need to be given the leadership to continue to run the school the way that has been successful in the past.

The educational. I only keep in touch with a few people from high school still.

The educational. As long as I got my work done I was able to socialize.

The pressure to be independent and self reliant most influenced me.

The social connections had the most influence on me. Because it taught me values that I cherish to this day. I'm able to communicate more with people with confidence in myself. I feel that my experiences from MEHS taught me so many valuable experiences but this was the best influence.

The social connections I made. I think I may have already articulated why in a previous answer.

The social connections. I met and made friends with fellow students from all over the State and learned about their cultures and communities.

The social connections. Being put in a new place where I had to meet so many new people and teachers all of a sudden helped me socially. I might not have done so well my first year of college without that.

The social. I am still good friends with many of the other students I knew then. They both had a really big impact on my life and future career. The dorm life was so full of life and joy. The school was all about learning more about yourself and the world around you. I am pursuing becoming a teacher inside of Alaska, hoping to pass along my experiences and stories of the school.

Question 45: Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your experiences while at Mt. Edgecumbe High School or after your graduation?

I had great experiences. The reason I didn't go to school the 2001-2002 school year is because I got suspended indefinitely (kicked out). I made a few bad choices and I paid for them. However, I went back my senior year and graduated with honors. I don't regret any decisions that I made...EVER. I believe that I have learned so many things from MEHS that no one can learn from anywhere else.

The weather is coming that I had a hard time with. The rain really got me depressed. I come from a place without much rain. Give more counseling for depression and education on depression.

The teachers were awesome!

Remained in contact with a lot of friends

After graduation, I really wish I had stayed in Sitka with my girlfriend at the time. I thought I would have had an eventful homecoming, but it felt like nobody even noticed I was back. In a way, its like I was of no use or consequence at home, save for the fact that I could empty the honey bucket again.

I appreciate so much the teachers and dorm aides that helped to raise me. Was great, loved it, and miss it.

I am very, very fond of the Truitts and I adore them so much. I have an immense amount of respect for Dr. Truitt and his dedication to MEHS. He has influenced me in many ways that I won't fully understand.

It's a shame the class reunions are rare. The year 2007 is my ten year reunion.

This school has so many great qualities. I hope that it will continue to stay open. So many more students can experience its greatness!

I haven't been in contact with most of my classmates and I wonder what they are doing in their lives. It would help if there was some type of way to keep that bridge.

When I went to UAF, I felt so much more prepared than the other AK Native students. I was already use to dorm life, and my educational skills were above theirs.

Very positive and changed the course of my life for the better.

I feel that there should be a more active alumni association. I have been out of school for 14 years now and have never been contacted about any events.

I was a great experience and I look back at all the great memories. I do miss the family connection with all the other students and faculty. Although things were tough at time, my over all experience was very positive.

Yes, when I entered college I as already way ahead of my classmates and able to test out of classes involving Computer, Math, and even English. I also did end up graduating both my undergrad and (2) Masters from a College in Phoenix, Arizona where Mr. Langford took us on a Computer IV trip. While I took the long and hard route the skills and education received stayed with me; even to this day.

MEHS generates memories that will last a lifetime. I've seen it in all my relatives that attended back in the good ole days when BIA ran the school, and I continue to see the tradition throughout the last 20 years. People have respect for you when you tell them you graduated from MEHS. I hope that legend continues to live on.

the school rules are like a house frame, kids that go to MEHS have a solid structure but sometimes after they graduate they don't know what it is like to have 'freedom' from rules so they drink a lot or drop out of college because they are not used to making their own decisions, if they were at home then their parents should gradually give them more freedom-which MEHS never gave me

Not all the students that attend MEHS are Native. Others fall through the cracks, white, Asian, etc.

I think it was a wonderful idea that we had "families" with a teacher being a "parent" to a group of us. I had wonderful teachers who I will never forget- Brenda Campen, Ray Stein, Rod Nutting, Gary Jarvill, Sharon Couch, Paul Johnson

I noticed that some students had a hard time adjusting to college life because it was too much freedom so they weren't as successful.

Mrs. Littlefield Rocks!!!!!!

Any forced changes to the way MEHS operates either the dormitory or educational environment will directly affect the successes of their students. The staff and administrators at MEHS should have the ultimate power to make decisions of the school. Possibly the school should change to a private or charter school to be able to continue to operate in the way it has in the past years and to ensure the success of educating Alaska Native rural community students. The rural community students are the ones who need the variety of education. Students from larger communities such as Anchorage and Fairbanks do not need MEHS as much as the rural students do because they have more opportunities for education.

When I attended MEHS, there was more of a sense of family. True, the fact that the student body was half the size it is now probably has something to do with it, but also, the sense of family was more strongly emphasized then.

I happen to be living with my girlfriend who also graduated with me.

Attending MEHS is a once in a life time experience, you make friends from all over the state and you get the best education around

The only reason I didn't attend college right after high school was because my grandfather had cancer and I wanted to be with my family. He died that fall sooner than we thought. So I attended the following year but a couple weeks before I started school my best friend died. So my heart wasn't into school then and it took a long time of grieving and healing before I ended up back in school.

I enjoyed MEHS a lot and recommend it to everyone. Thanks.

Learning about Alaska, our people and our government has prepared me to be an upstanding citizen.

Sports taught me allot about keeping in shape!! I suggest future Edgumbe students to participate in extracurricular activities.

made life easier education wise

"What does not destroy us only makes us stronger"

Going to MEHS made the first years of college so easy -- all those adjustments came naturally after 3 years at MEHS, while for others it was quite a struggle. I graduated from college in six years with two engineering degrees and two minors, and am now working on a Master's degree while working full-time, so I certainly feel I was prepared academically.

It was a good experience all in all. I am thankful that I had that opportunity. It is still a great option for some people. The teachers and residential staff were all excellent. I look back on my experience there with positive feelings.

I got on restriction a lot. I met a few cousins I thought I'd never see. I'm proud I went, but I should have gone to college right after.

College was not so hard because of the expectations at MEHS. I am grateful that the teachers I had expected what they did.

I went to college and then ended up working and getting specialized training and was a single parent. I did graduate with a BA degree and find that the locals in the village I live in don't value education as highly as I do nor see the value in higher education and it really annoys me.

I found myself carrying on some of the skill from Mt. Edgumbe over here to UAA. I enjoyed it a lot, and I don't have any regrets about attending the school.

If I hadn't attended Mt. Edgecumbe I wouldn't have been as prepared for my life neither socially or in the working world.

I would like to say that a particular teacher, Ray Stein made an impression on me that has carried me through my adult life.....amazing individual - RIP.

The MEHS community is very strong and supportive. Even after a decade of being away, faculty and staff are as friendly and helpful as ever. They definitely go above and beyond their duties and make this school what it is.

Any surveys about MEHS, I am always willing to do! Anything for my school, it would be only a piece of what I can give back.

heck of a lot of buddies made

Although I never went to college yet, as I fell in love and have 4 children now, but I have a great job, a new lovely home and I have to say that MEHS gave me a great start in life and I'm proud to a BRAVE!!!

FAMILY NIGHT DINNER. I think that was important because our teachers brought their children over to visit us. Many of us had left behind younger siblings and seeing younger children on campus brought that "AT HOME" feeling.

Attending college and the University of California, Davis is the best thing that has ever happened to me. I don't believe MEHS should encourage students to attend college in the state. Get out and experience life.

Great school

I made the best of friends there that I am still friends with. Anywhere I go, I always know somebody.

some of it was hell cause I couldn't return home for funerals of loved ones cause that costs too much, but all in all I liked High School And a few of the teachers were caring and memorable enough to really have had an impact on my life.

At first it was hard to let go, but I finally did, and learned to enjoy my memories and build on them.

I was once a residential hall advisor, and got to witness not-so-smart choices students can make such as drinking or smoking. I think it is important to continue having students involved in keeping an eye on activities to ensure everyone's safety and well being...kind of like a watchdog, if you will.

I think the experience of learning about new cultures, both inside Alaska and out is one of the best things about going to school there; you simply cannot get that anywhere else.

Yes the website for MEHS needs to go back online...because I still go to it for help...Like the student tools that used to be there...I still download the paragraph tool...the shaping guide and essay guides. The MEHS webpage is the only place I could ever find it at.

The teachers were amazing, I loved Brenda Campen she taught me so much. I also loved Mrs. Couch and Mr. Love. Great people the staff had a strong love for the students and giving them a quality education.

My friends and I still have deeply nostalgic moments concerning our time at Mt. Edgecumbe High School and I just hope that the current and future students are able to do so as well.

M.E.H.S. is a fantastic school.

In addition to the high level of education administered at MEHS, alumni (regardless of the year that they graduated) have a positive, lifelong connection to an educational experience unlike any other.

Mt. Edgecumbe gave me the tools I needed to be successful. It was a positive learning environment and made learning fun. When I struggled in life or college I was able to draw on my life experiences at Mt. Edgecumbe as well as the advice I received from the aides and teachers. I knew I could be successful given the fact that as a teen I was able to survive being away from the ones I loved for so long. The MEHS pushed students to excel and not to give up.

I believe that attending MEHS was one of the best decisions of my life. It was a turning point for me and I am so grateful for the experiences. I learned so much from my teachers at MEHS. I feel as if the experience provided the foundation I needed to be successful.

I will always cherish the memories and am very glad that I was able to experience it all. If students really try to work at getting somewhere they really can. One day my freshman year I asked Archie Young how people get on the Basketball hall of Fame and I worked and worked and Senior year without thinking I did get a letter from the sports coordinator saying that I made it. That was the best at MEHS. It is an honor. Then it dawned on me that if we work hard for what we want it will come sooner or later.

I felt a lot alive while being there. Socially, and was ready for a new days to learn something new.

Nothing else springs to mind.

Ambition, determination, and hard work are the keys to succeeding at Mt Edgecumbe. The positive influences are key to getting each individual student a chance at succeeding in life.

I hated being away from home at the time. I missed my family and I knew my mom cried for me sometimes, but she had to sacrifice so that I can have a better education. My village changed a lot after I left and all my elders have gone, but my home is what inspires me to go to school. I want to make things better for the next generation.

Although I realized I missed some of the experiences from my home school district I returned to MEHS every year because of the friends I made, the education I received and extra curricular activities that were available.

Keep it up!

Yes got me prepared for life.

I attended Sheldon Jackson college for one year. I transferred to UAF, then UAA. I even got a chance to act in a movie and a bunch of commercials.

Why they would NOT recommend MEHS to students from their home community:

Most [small city] School System kids are spoiled brats and would not blend well with Edgecumbe students.

I do not have a home community in Alaska. My Parents were teachers in villages and they moved every three to four years. The experience would not be appropriate for someone coming from [another] State due to the cultural differences.

In most cases no, not unless the student was having problems or not getting a good enough education in his/her home community.

[Large city] students have enough opportunities here without having to look elsewhere. Moreover, they have access to more honors/higher level classes here.

I feel that [Mat-Su community] has a wonderful array of educational choices exceeding that which Mr. Edgecumbe offers.

Why they WOULD recommend MEHS to students from their home community:

Many of the children in my hometown are from dysfunctional families and MEHS would be NOTHING BUT GOOD for them. For example, a kid from my hometown just graduated from MEHS last week. My Dad hired him 4 years ago to commercial fish with us. He's the only kid in that family of 7 to ever do something with his life. As a result, his family got mad at him, my family sort of adopted him. My family is one of the more fortunate in the village and my parents were the most strict which I am now thankful for. Taking this other boy under their wings have pretty much promised him a future that he deserves. For people like this, that take full advantage of the opportunity presented to them, MEHS is the perfect place.

I told everyone to go there. I want my children to go.

Absolutely. I encourage my young family members or friends to attend MEHS. Mt. Edgecumbe experience broadens a young person's horizon. If you are a quality and stable individual looking for a challenge outside your home community, you can't go wrong with MEHS.

It's a great place to learn about the world and oneself. It was also a great stepping stone for college.

It would depend on the student. Some people would benefit from staying at home, especially if they have a real traditional Native family and lifestyle I would have them stay at home and learn the old ways as best as they can. The kind of knowledge you can get from elders like grandparents is irreplaceable. However, if there's trouble at home

and no way to escape to a kind relative, I would say, get the heck out of there, don't even look back. Live life in the moment and have as much fun, raise as much hell as possible at Mount Edgecumbe.

I would because MEHS provides children with opportunities to broaden their future.

The experiences are like none other that you would find in a small community.

It was some of the best years of my life. There are so many opportunities there that I would have never experienced had I stayed in Tanana.

The education is way better. Teacher at home do not stay for long bringing the new teachers to learn the culture first. Students have the older system to graduate not the levels which don't really make sense to me. I think it is just to make it easier for students.

Making them lazy and doing thing at the last minute.

MEHS teaches you life skills, like how to be independent.

It is a great educational experience. It opens your eyes to other things our home town could not offer. It gives you a chance to travel and meet a lot of new people. The academics are varied so you can take classes that are of your interest.

The options are fewer in [small village], for certain.

There are many good and successful people who graduated before me and I hope to see many more moving through the ranks with the MEHS boost.

I would because they need to go out into another culture and see what is out there.

It was a great experience in all aspects. You only gain, you cannot lose.

For the education! I believe it's the best in the state.

It is important to expand your views.

It's a good experience to go through for the right person that can handle a structured environment.

Good life-preparing experiences Excellent academics.

Because it offers them a chance to a better education and with that education, like college, they would be better able to help Alaska Natives and the rest of the population

Although I feel that the quality of education at Mt. Edgecumbe is in danger and may be losing its quality, it is better than what is offered in my entire region. Also the exposure to different people and culture is priceless.

I think it's the best place one can gain experience and preparation for the world.

I always do, but it seems like they cannot disconnect from basketball long enough to be successful at MEHS. [small village] has state titles in both boys and girls basketball in the last 3 years.

More opportunities are available than offered in some of the rural communities. Also, this gives students an opportunity to meet other students and be away from Drugs and Alcohol. Sometimes in the village, there is no escape from these pressures, BUT in MEHS there is.

Great education, rate of going on to higher education is ALOT higher, learn life skills, get out of the village, experience sports, language, not related to all the boys, meet people from all over Alaska!

Yes, our HS enrollment numbers are way down and money just isn't here for the students. There are (3) teachers assigned to 7th-12th grades.

Great way to slowly adjust to living away from home

The skills learned, socially and academically are top notch, but the individual has to be committed to the program in order to succeed."

Good experience.

great experience

it takes kids away from drugs/alcohol

Only if academic standards remain high, otherwise I would recommend the Alaska Military Youth Academy.

Excellent college prep

Tell them to tough it up and home will always be home and it'll always be here.

It's a good school and allows village kids the exposure to the outside world

Because there are more activities and better education.

Students need a wide range of classes to be able to be successful in this day and age. Though teachers in the village are talented, students need to have a structured

environment to be able to focus on their schoolwork instead of focusing on negative peer pressure and often dysfunctional homes and/or parenting in their home community.

Yes and no. Depends on the student and where they would like to go in life. I think that a valuable education is lost when going to MEHS (i.e.: subsistence life style). On the flip side of that, a person that would like to see different aspects of the state and world should be encouraged to attend MEHS.

MEHS teaches you to live on your own. Has a great education program and readies you up for the world.

MEHS remains less clique-oriented and less elitist than the local high school of my hometown. Almost all of the students who attend from [small city] still find the experience to be preferred over [] High School.

It's an experience that may help you with college & afterwards.

It's a great experience and a school.

As I've said before, MEHS is not for everyone, we all have different learning styles and dreams for our future, but I think that anyone that has the courage and interest in some of the educational potentials and personal development, should give MEHS a shot.

why not? I had a fun time.

Yes. My 11 and 13 year old siblings can't wait until they're old enough to attend MEHS.

Yes, because attending MEHS will make you all you can be. Its the best school ever

Even though I don't really like the set up anymore I would still refer youth...it's a great life experience. You become more of a person especially if you succeed and remain there instead of returning home. The parents also need to be adamant about keeping their kids in school.

MEHS is a great school which offers many more classes than our village school and also many other extra curricular activities. MEHS provides a great living environment to prepare students for college.

It truly provides life lessons that young people of Alaska should know and learn.

Village education is not doing so well. my cousins don't get any homework all year. What is that going to prepare him for?

to be more independent

Offers opportunities to see the world, expand of knowledge and environment, make life long friends

It's an awesome school in a good environment. It also helps with life skills before becoming an adult and being on our own.

The education is more challenging that here and you get to know more people through out the state that will become lifetime friends

Taught me how to live on my own and meet new people.

MEHS opens a lot of doors for students who wouldn't have the chance otherwise. Especially in learning to socialize with all different types and races of people. A very important skill, that is hard to learn out in the isolated small villages.

Yes. I'd definitely choose it over [small town] High.

For now- until there are more opportunities offered in my home community for students. Coming from a smaller community, we did not have opportunities or funding to do many things that MEHS did- like study abroad programs or a variety of clubs that weren't just based around sports.

It's a grade-A high school education and the best preparation for life after high school possible. MEHS teaches you how to be an adult in the world, far more than living at home with your parents.

I think it's still a great opportunity for some people. Personally, I have children who are nearing that age. I want to keep them near me. I believe that they can learn and grow while staying here in our home and our community. Good education is great! I think people need balance also - spiritual, cultural. Our family and community lives have good value also. I want to be there for them during those years. I see it passing all too quickly.

great school

it's a great experience. learn more about yourself and others. fun learning. learn to live on your own after school is over. met new friends every year. build confidence.

Teens today need to experience a setting where students are held to a high standard and want to get the best education.

The high quality of education and the benefit of the residential life experience in preparation for college.

it offers more opportunities to learn, and become more confident in themselves

It was nice experience away from home, and they will teach you skills to be successful in college.

This might have been a bad experience at 1st but today i would not go back and change this for anything

It's a damn good school.

I would if the person is looking to improve/enhance their own self development to become self dependant, the opportunities that were offered because of the size of the school that were not available at other schools

Preparation for college. A vast arena of educational choices.

It is a great educational and networking opportunity.

Because I believe that my community needs an improvement in their education.

because its not as small and you have more things to do there. sports your get to travel more, more kids there. I come from a village of 200 people.

MEHS offers a cultural experience that [small town] High is lacking. Native kids in this community need their culture to be identified and not ignored. Plus, the educational opportunities are exceptional.

Yes! My younger sister now attends.

I

always encourage youth to attend, I volunteer to help with applications be a reference, I even show them my video yearbooks to show them how much fun it is.

So they can learn to be away from their mama

I'm always mentioning it to youth and even to my own children.

Because it is a good way to prepare students for collage or vocational raining. It allows the student or students know what it is like to "BE" away from family friends and "HOME". That way it won't be such a shock when one leaves home for higher education.

Yes. Individuals in villages need to experience life on the outside.

Yes, it produces great role models and leaders for the future of Alaska.

Excellent learning environment

The education/activities experience, learning to be independent, Sitka itself, and the friends your make.

I do not think that our educational system here is preparing our youth for further education after high school. The education here does not give students any drive to succeed in their goals. MEHS gave me goals the first year that I was there and I have them to this day. On the other hand if a family could move to another town all together I would not recommend it, unless they moved to Sitka. I think the education at MEHS was high quality. I just believe that a child needs to be with the parents for that discipline and for the bond of families. However, if the family has its own personal problems, and if MEHS would be the child's safe haven, then definitely yes.

It is a very unique experience all its own if you don't like it go home if you can handle it take it for all it is worth

To encourage others to broaden their horizons and test their limits - while enjoying small freedoms to make smart choices and experience Life in a strong community with friendships that will last a lifetime.

Top notch education and life skills.

because I learned more over there. and more activities. There's not much activities here so students tend to quit going school or get into trouble.

The experience is so unique, you'll never get to do something like this ever again in your whole life.

Definitely...in fact, I believe a lot of younger students followed pursuit. There was a fair number of students my age that attended. MEHS is well known as a place to gain an excellent education.

Because of the many different opportunities offered both academically and residentially

Yes, but only if they wanted a better chance at going to college or making new friends.

Definitely, kids need to be among their peers especially during their adolescent years, so they can develop social skills to succeed in the "real" world.

A great place to grow and find yourself, more people to be around.

Despite all of the negative things I hear about the school now I still would recommend it to the [hub community] teens because I believe in Edgecumbe and the purpose it once fulfilled. I know that it would be sad day if [hub community] High was a better educational institution than Edgecumbe. I hope it doesn't develop as such.

it shows students that there are a lot of different options available in life. especially when you come from a small community that doesn't have much to offer.

If they have true intentions of going to college and finishing they have to see life outside [the village] and not just for a basketball trip or 2 weeks for Close-Up. Learning to live outside the village is a huge challenge when you've grown up there. Also, the academic challenges and variety are greater at MEHS which also prepared me for my future. Not being a strong 4.0 student without doing much was a serious wake up call for me when I got to MEHS but in the long run it was an awesome reality check that I truly needed.

From my experiences, Edgumbe is a great school to attend.

It has so much to offer.

because there are less jobs in the village and if more youth went to this school there would be more students going to college or getting out of the village to find a more paying job. there would be less students having babies while still in high school. my personal opinion.

Just a great school all together.

The education is good compared to several rural villages. It is also good for becoming more independent. Again, though, I think 9th/10th grade is a little to young to be away for so long.

It would help them a whole lot on their education. Well, depending on if they're motive enough to learn.

Certainly to any girls I knew, if I still lived in AK. Perhaps not boys, based on my brother's description of his dorm experiences.

I have tried talking my little sister into applying. I tell her it is great to meet people from all over the state and get a great and challenging education. Also, to learn to live w/o her parents because some people are a little more attached to their parents and don't succeed to the best they can.

Its fun and helps you in life

Because the school at home will most often not take you places nor inspire you. If they do go to college strait from the village it would be hard for them. They would have to start with developmental classes to learning how to be on their own. Mt. Edgumbe would give you that opportunity.

Mt. Edgumbe prepares you for life. They help give you the lessons and tools that you would need in order to become successful in life.

The rural schools have only so many students and teachers that teach only the basic classes. Having higher levels of math, English, language, science etc. available is crucial

to attaining higher education after high school. I feel Mt. Edgecumbe graduates are better equipped for further education.

Because I know that they will never get the academic education that they can at Mt Edgecumbe.

I would recommend MEHS to any young individuals because of the experience, educational opportunities, and social connections.

Better than our school

A change in environment and opens many doors in your future for college.

Better education real life experiences.

It's a great experience, the education is top notch. The social experience sans parents is great as well.

Good opportunity for

The overall experience will better prepare them for life then living in the village.

Question 46: Do you have any other comments?

I am curious to why this survey is being conducted. I love talking about my experiences at MEHS. Especially with people who have not gone there and don't full understand the situation and context that students are put in. I am sure both sides of the story will be told here, but the bottom line is that the teachers are there to provide a great education.

This school is a great thing. I hope it is around in years to come. Loved the experience.

Mt. Edgecumbe High School cultivates young individuals with a well rounded education and invaluable social and life skills. Any responsible policymaker or State leader should be in favor of keeping this school alive and well funded.

My sister is there now and I have the impression the school has really gotten too large. There seems to be less sense of community now than when I was there.

I miss the ocean, the salty sea air.

Let the staff know they are thought of fondly and I hope to visit someday. I have fond memories that linger on Japonski Island.

I appreciate your work on this survey and I hope it helps MEHS continue to be a prominent educational facility in Alaska.

The teachers were very nice and worked with us, not only educationally, but socially as well. Like with homesickness and all of that, it was nice.

I'm glad this survey is conducted.

Every graduate should wait until they have their own living space, transportation, and income before deciding to have a child.

I am interested in the results of this survey.

I love MEHS, and am a proud Brave.

Go Braves!

I would like to see the results of this survey.

No, but I would be interested in a study of Village schools versus State or Regional schools. While I don't believe in consolidating Tribes I do believe in consolidating Resources to the maximum benefit possible.

I can't believe its been 17 years since I graduated. It feels like yesterday. :)
Will this survey be published?

Not sure what the question about "day student" meant! New program after I left perhaps. I lived in the dorms.

You need to have questions regarding post graduate education. I completed a Master's degree.

Very excited for my 10 year reunion that is steadily creeping up.

I want to be able to view this study as a finished publication. Please send me the information after this study is finished as to how I can read it. This is a positive study and is much needed to show the successes of MEHS as well as how the model should not be changed since it has provided so much in the form of successful Native members of the community by the students MEHS has graduated.

Additionally, the course offerings were more diverse when I was a student; there were more elective possibilities within the core curricular subject areas than there are now. Now, all of the teachers' time is tied up teaching the requirements so that there is less room for electives.

If this study is going to be used by individuals to enlarge the student count of MEHS what-so-ever, I've got one thing to say - don't let them do it. In most of the statistics I've looked at, and in what appears to be common knowledge, the bigger an educational institution, the greater proportion of students that fail. The close knit community and atmosphere that MEHS provides should not be disrupted by expansion, rather improved upon through the building of quality educational and extra-curricular programs. Bigger does not mean better, especially when it comes to education.

Aside from my girlfriend, there were plenty of other hot girls.

MEHS is the best school ever and I encourage more students to go. The teachers are the best around and I would like to thank them all.

I sometimes wish I could turn back time because even though it seemed hard then it is nothing like real life as an adult. I had NO worries then...no bills etc. All the fret than was useless. I would have done things differently if I knew what I know now.

Thanks for having me be a part of this survey.

I am thankful for what MEHS has given me, knowledge and confidence.

Too much influence of the Young Life group on students (not exactly a bad thing, but it felt like they sort of took over the social and residential life in MEHS)

I'm now employed at MEHS as an after-school tutor and substitute teacher.

Only that I hope I can find a way to move back to Alaska before I have children of high school age, so that maybe they can have the same sort of experience that I did.

I am really looking forward to seeing the results of this survey. Thanks!!

I hope this survey helps.

I think the HS students would benefit from more college prep, as I had a hard time adjusting to the increase in personal freedom and college life on the whole. I was not prepared for college life and went off track for awhile, and felt more naive than my college friends who were older and had experienced things I didn't even try to get away with while at MEHS. (drugs, alcohol, sex)
none.

Go Braves!

Mr. Stein was an awesome teacher, and I am sorry for his loss.

Are there any upcoming reunions? I am so there!

Mrs. McCrossin WORKS TOO HARD, she NEEDS A RAISE! Coach Calkins should never retire!!!

"My Views: One of the many great miracles of life is change. The change a child goes through to become an adult. The change of the land we live on from Pangaea to the current local of continents. It is also miraculous that we can learn a value from something totally unrelated. These changes will probably not come easy however, but there is hope. Any parent should be able to concur when they witness their child's transition into adulthood: the teenage years. It is not easy but it is none the less miraculous.

I attended my viticulture class last week and learned all about the biology and history of grapevine cultivars. As a crop plant, the grapevine has a noteworthy ability to regrow after severe pruning. The grape grower has the power to control this botanical community by the snip of his pruning shears. This is done to control unhealthy growths and to enable the extension shoots to grow and produce the wonderful fruit we know as grapes. If a vineyard is taken well care of the vines can remain productive for extensive periods of time.

Within the specie vinifera there are over 10,000 cultivars! You have your wine cultivars: Pinot noir, Cabernet, Riesling and then your table grape cultivars such as Thompson Seedless and Perlette.

So here it is folks – a lesson from the grape vine. As a community (a cluster of grapes), our growth is dictated by the social actions (the pruning shears) of our neighbors. In order to enable healthy growth in our community we need to do some pruning of the unhealthy shoots. How about it? Eradicate the racism shoot. Prune that religious barrier shoot. Put the blades on the shoot of heterosexism and grip hard. What about the denizen vines of hate? You got it! Snip it off.

Our current vines may not be up to par, but it is never too late to make a CHANGE: a miracle in life. We can all be an integral part in this miracle so take the sheers and let's see some healthy growths! The regenerative capacity is awesome for every type of person (cultivars).

So now you have it; a little information about the grapevine and a whole lot of hope for our future. And when people ask you where you got your values from – tell them you got them though the grape vine."

I think MEHS changes through the years. From when I went there to when my brother went there, seems like a world of difference. The kids seem naughtier and do more drugs/alcohol and behave worse.

I miss Molly Kimzey

After the initial homesickness, I grew into a well-rounded individual who took advantage of activities available. I believe that no matter a student's capabilities or interests, there should be a wide range of activities to keep students interested and involved.

I hope this survey will do something proactive for the good of the school with its information and not become dusty statistics on a hard drive.

I often wonder what I can do to give back to the school. I am very proud to say that I am an alumni and want to see the school program to be successful. If I were asked to provide some sort of financial support or to visit the school... or whatever was needed, I would do.

I truly did appreciate the opportunity to attend Mt. Edgecumbe during an extremely difficult point of my life.

I miss Edgecumbe

I don't know what its like to send your children away, but I know it was hard on my mother, I'm glad she kept me there even when I cried, kicked and screamed, otherwise I don't think I would have finished college.

Thank you for putting light on this awesome school. It finally gets recognition statewide and maybe beyond.

Mt Edgecumbe taught me that I am capable of doing whatever I choose to do in my life.

No just keep it up!

Yes I loved the school and still am proud to have gone to school there.