

# Great Alaska Schools

## 2014 Candidate Questionnaire

### 20 Questions on Alaska Education Policy

|   |            |                                   |
|---|------------|-----------------------------------|
| Candidate Name: Neal Lacy                                   |            | Legislative District: District 10 |
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| Prior Elected Office, If Any: Mat-Su school board 2010-2013 |            |                                   |

### High Standards For Quality Alaska Schools

**Background:** Great Alaska Schools is committed to the achievement of high quality public education for every Alaska child. To reach this goal we believe Alaska must focus on specific outcomes, and set high standards for schools and teachers. One such set of standards has been established by the Anchorage United for Youth partners with their "90 by 2020" program. They specifically advocate tracking, among other things, whether Alaska children are ready for kindergarten, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading proficiency, 8<sup>th</sup> grade math proficiency, and high school graduation readiness as measures of educational success. More background information on their efforts can be found at: [www.90by2020.org](http://www.90by2020.org).

1. Do you support efforts like the 90 by 2020 partnership to establish education standards? Yes  No   
Please Explain

Educating our most precious resource takes a community/statewide effort. We need benchmarks to asses student performance and have resource programs ready to step in to assure continued educational progress. Since the early 1990's the legislative majority has been piece mealng funding for education. Lately they have taken to funding one time items that have nothing to do with keeping teachers and staff in the class. It is a proven fact that adequately staffed schools promote student learning and safety.

2. Are there other measures that you would consider better indicators of school quality/performance? If so, what are they?

Each school in the state has unique needs that are specific to that school. A system needs to be put in place that takes account of that unique setting in that school and its population.

## **Assessment of Alaska's Public School System**

3. Please describe what you consider to be one or two strengths (or successes) of Alaska's public school system statewide.

Despite the lack of the legislative majority's educational foresight, our school districts are doing a remarkable job of educating our students. Graduation rates are going up, there are more choices within the public education system and we have safe schools.

4. Please describe what you consider to be one or two weaknesses (or failures) of Alaska's public school system statewide.

The state is losing teaching talent at an alarming rate, this is due to a flawed pension system and continual layoffs.

5. Please describe what you consider to be one or two strengths (or successes) of your local school district.

The Mat-Su District which I helped formulate policy for, is doing a great job of educating our children given the resources we had to work with. The district has magnet, special mission career and tech, charter, home schooling, college prep and alternative schools.

6. Please describe what you consider to be one or two weaknesses (or failures) of your local school district.

The biggest bone of contention for me as school board member was the fact our district does not have full time nurses at a number of schools. In Talkeetna all of the schools share one nurse. these schools are 40 miles apart. To me this is a major safety issue.

7. Please describe one or two actions that the Legislature might take that would address a weakness you identified above.

The legislatures real endgame here is to privatize education in Alaska. By funding education in the current way it makes our schools look like they are not performing, but guess what they are performing, despite what the legislative majority has done.

8. Do you believe decisions regarding education spending priorities (e.g., technology, school safety, Pre-K, classroom size, etc.) rest primarily with the Legislature or locally elected School Boards? Please Explain

The legislature needs to provide adequate funding to operate schools. The local school board then needs to asses its own unique needs to assure student achievement. Lowering student to teacher ratios and pre-K should be priority one.

9. Which state expenditures (e.g., transportation infrastructure, energy infrastructure, public safety, gasoline, etc.) do you consider a higher priority than education funding?

All of these expenditures are important, but education is equally important. Education should be at the top of the list.

## Public Funds for Private Schools

10. Do you support placing a constitutional amendment on the ballot that would allow public funds to be used to fund students' education at private and religious schools? Yes  No   
(If yes, skip to Question 12)

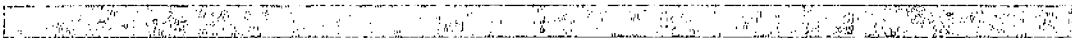
11. If no, are there any restrictions or requirements that could be put into place that would change your position on Question 10? Yes  No   
Please Explain

## Education Funding

Background: Between FY2011 and FY2014, the Base Student Allocation (BSA) was unchanged by the Legislature. Over that period, as a result of this inaction in the face of ordinary inflation, the BSA lost over \$400 in purchasing power. During the 2014 Legislative Session, Great Alaska Schools advocated for an increase in the BSA of \$400 in FY2015 and, as a temporary alternative to inflation-proofing the formula, scheduled increases of \$125 in the following two years.

The 2014 Legislature voted to increase the BSA by \$150 in FY15, \$50 in FY16, and \$50 in FY17. In addition, they appropriated funding "outside" the BSA (using the same distribution formula as the BSA) in an amount equivalent to a BSA increase of \$72 for FY15.

Assuming no funds are appropriated outside the BSA in FY16, the BSA would need to be increased by \$425 that year to return to the purchasing power of FY11.



12. Do you support the actions of the 2014 Legislature regarding the level of education funding provided? Yes  No

13. Would you support an increase in the BSA of \$425 in FY16? Yes  No   
(if yes, skip to Question 16)

14. Would you support any increase in the BSA in FY16? Yes  No   
(if no, skip to Question 16)

15. What is the maximum increase in the BSA in FY16 that you would support?

16. Would you introduce a bill to effectuate your desired BSA increase? Yes  No

17. If a majority of your caucus did not support the level of BSA increase you supported in your response to Questions 13 – 15, would you still vote to approve such a BSA increase (regardless of the consequences within your caucus)? Yes  No

18. Do you support inflation-proofing the BSA amount going forward to provide durability and stable purchasing power for Alaska's education funding? (If yes, then skip to Question 20) Yes  No

19. Do you support continuing the practice of scheduled increases to the BSA going forward at least three years to provide predictability to education funding? Yes  No

20. Would you like to explain any of your answers to Questions 12 – 19? (Please indicate which answer you are explaining.)

On 17, What is the caucus going to do send me to the principal's office, been there got the tee-shirt.  
On 19 I like long funding formulas like 5 years. As a former school board member and public school teacher, this would let districts budget for a lot longer period of time. Can you imagine the money a district would save by not negotiating a contract every year.

Please use the space below to expand on any answers for which you need additional space. (Please indicate which answer you are expanding on.)

I am very concerned about attempts to privatize education in Alaska. This past legislation looks an awful lot like per-written law from ALEC and my opponent is the "go-to" guy for ALEC in this state.