

Great Alaska Schools

2014 Candidate Questionnaire

20 Questions on Alaska Education Policy

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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, 3rd grade reading proficiency, 8th 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.



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

The goal of 90 percent graduation by 2020 is a great goal and I support it.
It is great that simple measures to increase the confidence and self esteem of youth are part of the effort.

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

Reading and math proficiency, the high school dropout rate and post secondary enrollment and completion are all worthy measures. I did not see the post secondary enrollment and completion as measures. In today's working market many of today's good jobs require post secondary education to have success in landing a job.

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.

Increases in the high school graduation rate are promising and need to continue. Improvements in school nutrition programs have been seen.

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

Insufficient funding to Alaska's schools does not help them be successful. I support full funding for Alaska's schools.

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

The Fairbanks Building Educational Success Together, B.E.S.T. program that provides support for home school students is a Fairbanks North Star School District success story.

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

The Fairbanks North Star School District has a low high school graduation rate.

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

Tracking whether Alaska children are ready for kindergarten, 3rd grade reading proficiency, 8th grade math proficiency, and high school graduation readiness as measures of educational success (such as mentioned at the top of this form) could be investigated as a mandate.

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

I believe the locally elected school boards should be the primary body to determine spending priorities. I think Legislative decisions regarding funding priorities are all too often based on decisions to underfund public schools as a whole and yet try to better fund specific areas at the cost of the whole.

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

I don't think anything is more important than education.

Now is not the time to reduce educational funding so Alaska, the owner state, can take a smaller share of oil revenue.

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

Supporting vouchers undermines support of public schools already suffering in today's tight financial times.

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.)

I support the Base Student Allocation (BSA) being tied to the rate of inflation which will allow school districts across the state to anticipate their funding.

Arguing to increase funding just to make up for the cost of inflation is not how our legislators should have to spend time every session. Educated youth are important to our future. Forward funding public education by including enough each year to offset inflation is the right thing to do.



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

Public Funds for Private Schools (questions 10 and 11)

Public schools are an important foundation for democracy in America, bringing together children of diverse backgrounds into a common educational system and experience.

Public schools should be funded well enough to provide as great an education as private schools and an even better education than religious schools that may omit teaching subjects such as evolution and discredit archaeologist estimates that modern humans have been on the Earth for about 200,000 years.