

# Great Alaska Schools

## 2014 Candidate Questionnaire

### 20 Questions on Alaska Education Policy

Candidate Name: Matt Claman		Legislative District: 21
Mailing Address: 3318 Illiamna Avenue		
City: Anchorage	Zip: 99517	Phone: (907) 350-3105
E-Mail: info@MattClaman.com		Cell:
Prior Elected Office, If Any: Anchorage Assembly, Acting Mayor		

### 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

Increasing graduation rates reflects the success of our schools and builds support for our public schools.

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

Many indicators, both qualitative and quantitative, measure school quality and performance. These include student-teacher ratios, graduation rates, reading and math proficiency, kindergarten readiness, college placement rates, and vocational/career placement rates. I am open to considering additional ideas for measuring school quality and performance.

## **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 budget cuts and teacher layoffs, the dedicated teachers, committed parents, and motivated students are the core strengths of the Alaska public school system. We must build on these strengths as we move forward with 21st century education.

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

Legislative cuts to school funding and the failure to keep pace with inflation are weaknesses. If these cuts continue, most schools will have to make major cuts to teachers and staff over the next three years.

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

The Anchorage School District demonstrates a strength in providing a well-rounded education that helps students to build a foundation for learning, to develop their intellectual interests, and to learn vocational/technical skills.

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

ASD needs to increase access to its vocational and technical education programs. I support STEAM (science, technology, engineering, the arts, and mathematics), and believe that we should continue to teach skills that are needed in current and future job markets.

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

School funding should keep pace with inflation. The legislature should focus on supporting and improving education programs and services within a stable budget.

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 should work with the School Boards for consistent school funding that keeps pace with inflation and protects Alaska's constitutional right to public education. School Boards should retain local control of education programs and make decisions regarding expenditure of education funds.

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

Education is our best investment for the future. In making budget decisions in a legislative environment with competing interests, we need to work together to find reasonable solutions that strengthen the state.

## 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

I believe we have to protect the constitutional right to public education, and I am willing to listen to discussions and ideas.

## 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.)

Question 17: I believe one of my greatest strengths as a candidate is working out differences and finding common ground. Working together, we can find reasonable solutions.

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

Question 3: Students who work hard and follow through on opportunities can succeed. We need to offer educational opportunities that allow all students to fulfill their aspirations and meet the economic needs of the state.

Question 5: We should work to support all aspects of a student's education — from reading, writing, and arithmetic to athletics and the arts to science, engineering, and technology.

Overall: We should continue our efforts to attract quality teachers and skilled principals and administrators. We should encourage innovation in the classroom and support 21st Century education.