

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 90 by 2020 partnerships effort is a step in the right direction. The lofty but attainable goals in attendance, proficiency, and graduation are rightfully backed by the education and business communities. I would like to see better cooperation with more businesses in Alaska. I would also like to see this extended into science and social studies. Additionally, consideration of healthy lifestyles for Alaska students could be a part of this goal. I do not support these measures being used to evaluate teachers or schools.

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

I'm disappointed that the legislature required a Graduation Exit Exam and then chose to drop the requirement. I would certainly like to know the reason for this. I do support the Common Core State Standards [as standards] and the closely aligned literacy and math Alaska State Standards. I'm also in support of the Next Generation Science Standards, and hope that Alaska chooses to adopt them in place of the poor existing Alaska Science Standards. Testing can be done without using the national consortia and still be able to compare our progress with that of others. NAEP testing is done in our state to put our students into the norms for national education. Alaska has, in the past, chosen not to participate fully in NAEP testing. I support our participating fully in the NAEP program to allow us to see how we are truly doing on a national scale.

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.

Alaska can be most proud of its public education system having some of the most diverse schools in the country. At a time when other states bicker about which students they do not want to educate, we educate all who enroll. Also, we have an exemplary system of school choices.

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

Alaska has a high transiency rate for students, both intra-state and inter-state. As new students came to my classroom, their records were lacking or missing. Having records accompany students will help with making their transition to new schools much easier. Also, student pull outs

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

Celebrating the diversity that exists in ASD is a strength for both the school district and the community. Also, the graduation support counseling that is on the chopping block yearly has been effective for many students to assist their attaining a diploma.

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

Educating the public on what parts of the requirements in education are federally mandated so that the public understands why the budget seems so large, even though many parts are paid by federal funding. Also, the divisiveness between K-5 goals and 6 -12 goals conflict. This needs

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

The Legislature could compare true costs per student with all of the federal needs included. This would be necessary for rural, charter, and large public schools. Additionally, professional development for new teachers to be effective in earlier years is imperative.

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

This is a difficult question. I would like to see consistent guidance from the State through DEED, with local school boards being allowed to make decisions best affecting their populations. Safety for all schools, both from outside and from within is paramount. All teachers need professional development on science classroom safety. Required lock-down, fire, earthquake, and other drills make the response for real emergencies go very well. CTE is getting just notice for its importance

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

None are constitutionally mandated like education, so none. I do consider public safety and transportation infrastructure necessary for the future of the state. Energy infrastructure is very expensive in all but the large metropolitan areas. Gasline development will be important, but is not yet ready. Most pressing as I write this is the need for an oversight committee to keep sole-source contracting to friends of legislators from ever occurring again.

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

If no state money goes to religious schools and all schools that receive state money are required to participate fully in state mandated testing, I would be more in favor of this change in the policy.

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.)

17. A survey of the constituency with the BSA increase would help me to determine this, I intend to fully fund. If the survey shows the voters to be more divided, I would probably fund until the approval for education funding were significantly less than 35%.

General about BSA funding: I'm not yet certain that BSA is the best way to fund education for public schools in Alaska, but it's the most understood at this point. I would like to explore other options to see if the divisive funding for public education PK-16 can be accomplished earlier in the session and to plan for it in advance. I've looked at state funding in some other states and the BSA seems to be the most common way to effect equality. Only two other states that I can think of, Hawaii and Illinois, have roughly half of their population in one metropolitan area. Hawaii has a statewide district so that both state and district decisions are the same. From <http://shfwire.com/node/8059> Alaska: Total funding per student: \$15,487 Hawaii: \$11,821 Ohio: \$11,555 Wisconsin: \$12,005 Minnesota: \$11,972, so the BSA idea can be used as data averages, as well as a way to fund. As an idea, maybe the necessities of energy costs for building and transportation of students could better be done with municipal funding, with the funding of teacher positions be handled by the state.

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

4. for some reasons take precedence over pull outs to help students attain grade level performance. This needs correction.
6. consistency.
8. and this needs to extend into other areas to prepare career and college ready students in all areas.

I do not see any mention in your questionnaire about STEM education in particular. That Alaska has lost or re-purposed the state science supervisor position shows less importance in STEM education. Additionally, our state with so many workforce development jobs in STEM careers, has put more emphasis on CTE and less on STEM education. I'm confident that this is not the correct path for our future. ASD has some good programs in place for health and engineering academies, as well as the very successful King Career Center program. I fear these will soon be lost with decreased funding. Mat-Su is also investing in STEM education, but may also lose what has been gained. Instead, we need to fund more of these programs statewide. I would do what I can to partner with business and industry to put more emphasis on STEM education so that Alaska youth will be ready for the careers in these fields.