

Great Alaska Schools

2014 Candidate Questionnaire

20 Questions on Alaska Education Policy

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Prior Elected Office, If Any: State Representative		

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

High standards are the markers on the road to goals that students, teachers and parents can use to advance success. Detailed standards allow everyone to know if the eventual target can be met. However, project based curriculum avoids the lock-step feeling that is sometimes experienced in one-size-fits-all education. High graduation rates are achievable with engaged students.

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

Ready for kindergarten literacy is a very important goal. That is why I sponsored the new application of the education tax credits to early childhood education and support programs. Emphasis on WorkKeys in middle and high school programs align with the goals and interests of individual students and engage more effectively the 70% of our students who do not align themselves towards college.

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.

Adoption of the new Alaska standards.
Alaska performance program.

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

The emphasis of standardized structure model for struggling schools improvements.

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

High emphasis on good teachers and professional development.
Emphasis on student success.

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

Failure for universal implementation of mobile device use.
Too much central control of technology.

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

I worked with Chapman School to secure a 2011 pilot one-one iPod Touch project for grades 1-8 and in 2014 for iPad minis for Kindergarten and teachers. The legislature could fully fund the 1-1 initiative.

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

Mostly local but pushed by legislature with special grants.

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

All things need to be balanced.

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.

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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?
(if yes, skip to Question 16) Yes No
14. Would you support any increase in the BSA in FY16?
(if no, skip to Question 16) Yes No
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? Yes No
(If yes, then skip to Question 20)

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 agree with Great Alaska Schools that using 2011 funding levels as a benchmark is an appropriate target for education funding. I also support increasing the BSA as the primary mechanism for providing education funding that is predictable and sustainable. While I support a \$425 increase in the BSA, I cannot commit to that number at this time. Until I see the entire budget, I can't know if such a funding level would be precluded by other required state obligations. Education is a top priority, and I support full education funding along with health priorities for Alaskan children.

19). The forward schedule should be a two year rotation on even years instead of three years. A three year rotation means that some years the decision would be made in the first year of a legislature and a non-election year which lowers citizen leverage.

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