

Great Alaska Schools
2014 Candidate Questionnaire
20 Questions on Alaska Education Policy

Candidate Name:

Legislative District: 36

Chere Klein

P.O. Box 1647

Ward Cove, AK 99928

Phone: 907- 617-2977

E-Mail: chere@chereklein.com

Prior Elected Office, If Any:

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? Please explain. **Yes** No

Response: Yes. Completing a high school education and graduating is critical to the success of our children, state, and businesses in Alaska. Our children are one of our greatest resources and we cannot afford high rates of drop-outs. In order to sustain and grow Alaska as a healthy place to live, our citizens must be able to live, work, and succeed economically, and that takes being educated through high school. Successful graduation takes continuous, steady, progressive work with feedback checks and balances along the way to help measure, refine, rework, and move forward often by a variety of methods to ensure we don't lose kids along the way.

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

Response: Being able to solve applied, 'common sense' life type challenges and problems successfully at certain points in age or maturity. More diverse ways of teaching, alternative methods, times, dates, schedules,

Do away with "seat time" as a necessity of gaining credit for learning.

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.

Response: Alaska schools willingness to embrace technology, computer assisted learning, distance learning, and the latest communication systems. Alaska is on the leading edge compared to other states' public schools.

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

Response: Lack of core basic common sense skills in many cases which in the past students already arrived starting school with -- having learned these skills at home as a basic expectation of our society/culture.

Job related work force related skills -- basic soft skills like on time attendance, answering phone calls and questions appropriately, customer service or basic politeness in interacting and communicating with other people (verbal and written), cause and effect (impacts).

Students on both ends of spectrum seem to be taken care of but the average student seems to be the ones who are getting our least attention and yet will be the ones whom are a majority of our workforce and society.

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

Response: As a result of blended learning and technology use in the classroom, graduation rates have continued to climb as has attendance and graduation at our alternative high school.

Our local school is involved in an effort in coordination with DEED to send digital classes to students all over the state. However, there are many small schools, and even larger ones, that do not have the capacity to offer the courses needed for the Alaska Performance Scholarship

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

Response: Those programs that are constitutionally mandated which includes education.

Public Funds for Private Schools

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

Response: No.

7. 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

Response: Not that I am aware of at this time.

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 2 yrs.

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 \$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

Response: Yes. I understand what the legislature did with regard to the uncertainty of revenue in the future. However, that being said schools do need certainty about funding so they can operate in an efficient manner and maintain current systems and personnel. Without some certainty of funding, cuts in both personnel and improved learning systems are inevitable. Forward funding of known amounts in the BSA would give schools that certainty.

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

Response: No. I see that as too much for the state to sustain. The Increase should be more than what the last legislature appropriated but I need more information and input before I could answer that question accurately.

14. Would you support any increase in the BSA in FY16? (if no, skip to Question 16) **See answer above.**

15. What is the maximum increase in the BSA in FY16 that you would support? **Need to look at current revenue forecast**

16. Would you introduce a bill to effectuate your desired BSA increase?

Response: I don't believe that as a brand new legislator I would be the most effective person to do that but I would consider co-sponsoring. Although I was on the fringes of it this last session, I was primarily on the Resources/LNG/SB21 bills and another staffer was devoted full time to the BSA discussion with Rep P Wilson

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 consequences within your caucus)? Yes No
I cannot say one way or another at this time; it would depend on our fiscal circumstances; I would not vote for an increase in any budget if our state cannot afford it

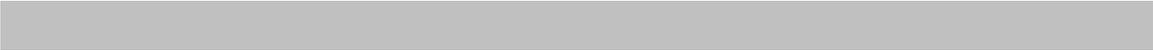
18. Do you support inflation-proofing the BSA amount going forward to provide durability and stable purchasing power for Alaska’s education funding? (If yes, skip to Question 20) Yes No

Response: Yes. But all funding of all state programs are contingent upon state revenues. We all know that currently our state revenues are declining each year because oil production is declining. Without carefully studying the entire state budget as a whole it is difficult to explain exactly how you would vote on one particular budget line item in isolation.

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? Y N

Response: Yes if our revenues are increasing.

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


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