

# 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, 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

I have had the privilege to serve as a high school social studies teacher for the past 32 years at Ketchikan High School. I understand more than most the importance of every Alaska child graduating from high school. Therefore, the goal of attaining a 90% graduation rate by 2020 is a very worthy one. I would need to know more specifics about the "tracking whether children are ready for kindergarten, 3rd grade reading proficiency, 8th grade math proficiency, and high school graduation readiness as measures of educational success" in order to determine if I fully support the specific program, but I'm certainly in support of the concept of "90 by 2020".

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

The NWEA (Northwest Evaluation Association, [nwea.org](http://nwea.org)) is a non-profit organization that offers summative style common core Measures of Academic Progress MAP, that are research driven and put together by professionals in education. The National Blue Ribbon Schools Program "recognizes public and private elementary, middle, and high schools where students perform at very high levels or where significant improvements are being made in students' academic achievement."

## **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 State high school graduation rates have been going up over recent years. More school districts state wide are increasing online access to their students which open up distance learning opportunities. Class sizes are generally smaller on a statewide basis than those of the average student attending school in the lower 48. ■

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

1. Its difficult for Alaska schools to meet the needs and interests of all Alaskan students because of the wide range of cultural differences that exist among Alaskan students and because of the "economy of scale" principles at work in the smaller rural districts across the state.

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

Our district does a good job of ensuring that those students with post high school educational goals have access to programs/courses that help to put them on the course of achieving those goals.

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

We need to do a better job of reaching the mid range level students in our districts. While we do a good job of providing programs for "high achievers" and for studetns with special needs, its the "average" performing student that we need to do a better job of meeting their interests in school.

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

Make sure their is funding to enlarge/enhance vocational programs, extra-curricular activity programs including academic and non-academic acitivity programs.

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

Definitely, locally elected School Boards. The closer the group is to the actual schools that they are impacting with those decisions, the better off the students and the community as a whole is.

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

Public safety, depending on the level they are able to provide public safety. If the level of funding is putting the public's safety at risk then the education of are youth is at risk.

## **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

Yes, if the private schools were put under the same mandates & rules that public schools are under in order to receive that public funding, I would support it.

## **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?  
(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

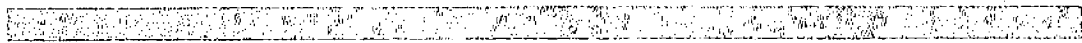
18. Do you support inflation-proofing the BSA amount going forward to provide durability and stable purchasing power for Alaska's education funding? (If yes, then skip to Question 20) Yes  No

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 was unable to "click" to locate a box to respond to questions #15. What is the maximum increase in the BSA in FY16 that you would support?

The state is in a period of declining revenue and will be so for at least the next several years. This will require the legislature and administration to prioritize its "operating budget" as we will be unable to fund all departments of the government at its current level. Investing in the education of our youth will be a priority for me and it makes good economic sense. Our future workforce needs to be as skilled as possible in order to increase our work force productivity and keep our industries as competitive as possible in the international market place. Quality education is the key.



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 2: In order for the goal of "90 by 2020" to be achieved we must always work to foster each child's attachment to school itself, and encourage individual children to value the importance of their own education. Families and schools that honor the individual growth of each child in his/her learning process is also a very important element in helping us achieve 90 by 20/20.

Question 5: 60% of our students receive some form of scholarship aid to help them gain access to postsecondary educational programs. We do a particularly good job of putting students on the path of establishing careers in the medical, maritime, and building construction fields.