

Great Alaska Schools

2014 Candidate Questionnaire

20 Questions on Alaska Education Policy

Candidate Name: Verne Rupright	Legislative District: 7-D	
Mailing Address: 866 West Spruce Ave		
City: Wasilla	Zip: 99654	Phone: 373-3223
E-Mail: bearup@mtaonline.net		Cell: 354-0841
Prior Elected Office, If Any: Mayor/Manager City of Wasilla		

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

To provide some continuity within the public education system. Students that graduate form High School have many more job opportunities available, including if they choose military service, according to typical employment requirements. A graduate also is better prepared for college or vocational training. More graduates supply a better educated work force and are an asset to the State of Alaska.

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

There is a plethora of standardized educational testing models which are given throughout the K-12 curriculum. I believe this testing should be consistent, and as opposed to labeling, they are an excellent tool to see where proficiency should be improved and what models are working in different schools. The State should use this information to implement these models. We just don't want graduates, we should say we want the best educational system - period.

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.

The tenacity of many teachers and parents trying to make it work

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

Lack of disciplinary accountability and lethargy in the system to inspire kids to keep a goal in mind and move in the direction to obtain it.

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

Mat-Su has a voter base that understands that we needed more classrooms and voted to fund it and a pretty awesome Superintendent that engages.

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

A sometimes moribund and less than enthused school board that need direct parental and citizen involvement to inspire them and less regulations to help promote forward thinking

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

Reiterate the authority of school officials to take direct action when necessary and not be too concerned with lawsuits. Also direct sufficient funding for structured programs such as the Youth Academy for those at risk.

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

School boards, especially ones that do not choke themselves with over regulation

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

Each has a priority within its own boundaries for the need it serves. Sorry this was a very disingenuous question.

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, core curriculum is a must such as math, history, science, language and PT. No political bent and teach kids how to think not what to think.

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.)

As Mayor and Manager of the City of Wasilla inflation and purchasing power of dollars must be watched closely. I negotiate three union contracts periodically and understand that rule. Such as with any project a dollar today is not the dollar of tomorrow. One must know they have a problem before they can solve it.

During my administration, the city of Wasilla has been able to fund on just 2% sales tax and no property tax, even as the sales tax revenue had not met the Cost Of Living (COL) annual increase on a number of the past six years. It takes smart management and forward thinking to prepare for such events not within our control. This is much similar to what many governments and their agencies facing now due to revenue shortfalls.

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 #10. I did not agree with the constitutional amendment to publicly fund private schools. This would be a financial disaster which would wind up on the backs of the local taxpayer. As more and more vouchers were issued, less money would be allocated to the public schools, but the taxpayer would still have to fund the buildings and infrastructure eventually leading to collapse of the public school system and a horrific economic burden to the community.

With more local control of public schools, which I support obviously through my previous statements, we can improve upon the existing educational system.