

SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION TASK FORCE

Rep. Lynn Gattis & Rep. Tammie Wilson, Co-Chairs

*Application
Questionnaires*

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Marilyn Anderson

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1. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

I would like to be a member of the Educational Task Force. I am a lifelong Alaskan and retired teacher of forty years --thirty nine in Alaska.

2. What strengths and/or skills would you bring to the task force?

My strengths include love for Alaska and its children. Another strength is my training to observe, listen and discover children's individual educational needs and ascertain how to meet them so they can be successful citizens, using their own skills in problem solving and development of our communities and state.

3. Have you been a member of another task force before? If the answer is yes, please provide additional information.

4. What's your view about the public education system in Alaska?

Certainly Alaska has unique educational difficulties and opportunities unlike those of other states. Therefore to equate to and adopt national standards can be like shooting ourself in our foot.

5. In your view, are Alaskan public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

6. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?

Increasing educational funding will not become our cure all. We are fooling ourselves if we think so especially when the resources for our schools are decreasing. Our graduation rate is declining despite more money being allocated to schools.

7. What, in your opinion, is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?

It is time to seriously look at and adopt cost cutting while improving our product.

8. What are some ideas, if any, that you think could improve public education in Alaska in general?

Suggestions I purport:

- A. Do not install public preschool. We must teach smarter rather than more and longer.
- B. Lower classroom size for grades 1-2-3 and pay those teachers more. Make sure these children become confident in the foundations of education--phonics, reading, listening, attention, writing, math, beginning reasoning and problem solving. If schools are successful here we will spend less in remediating missed basics.
- C. Spend less time on testing and paper work. Teachers must have time to teach.
- D. Increase class size in upper grades where deemed possible.

- E. Do not purchase new textbooks and curriculum unless necessary ie: math books,
- F. Literature, etc. use books and equipment already purchased (and are now stored in warehouses)
- G. (The Anchorage school district recently purchased the Handwriting Without Tears curriculum for introduction of cursive, with little follow through and is now asking the question "why teach cursive writing?")
- H. Include in middle school and high school curriculum the teaching of logic and reasoning and economics with emphasis on budgeting and personal spending, and why resource development
- I. is important to our state and the funding of our schools and economy.
- J. Give back to parents their parental responsibilities of providing food, family values and culture,
- K. Decrease the need of janitorial help by having students empty waste baskets and pick up trash each day
- L. Invite the input from business people as to what is needed for successful employment
- M. Have an intern program with students and businesses
- N. Students trained in the planning, cooking and serving the lunch program

These are a few of my ideas as to how to improve public education without increasing funding

9. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for their time and work. If appointed, how much time would you be able to devote?

As I am retired, I do have time to give to this task force.

10. Please provide any other information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of this Task Force.

Steve Atwater

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1. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

I want to be appointed to the task force because I believe my participation in this process will help generate recommendations to move public education in Alaska forward. I feel that public education in our state is at a critical juncture and that it is imperative that the legislature fully understand how to better support K-12 improvements. Conversely, I view the work of the task force as a way to help educators better understand the constraints the legislature faces with funding and supporting public education. I am convinced that improvements to public education are not all dependent on funding and could, with legislation, loosen some of that which is holding education back. I would like to help the legislature understand how best to determine quality in education and in turn, promote changes that will lead to improvements in our schools.

With more than 20 years of experience in K-12 in our state, and a good understanding of Alaska, I am confident in stating that I am well positioned to serve on the task force. I believe my rural/urban experience and perspective (see question 2) will be a benefit to the task force. Further, although not formally endorsed by my professional association (AASA), my interest in being a member is supported by AASA President Thomason and the ACSA Executive Director Johnson. I know that my past experience as my association's president will also be useful. In sum, I am well established in Alaska's K-12 community and know that I would do a good job with communicating task force progress, concerns and queries to my peers. Finally, my school board supports my application and if selected, my membership on this task force.

2. What strengths and/or skills would you bring to the task force?

I first came to Alaska in 1981 while in college to commercial fish to earn money for tuition. I spent 18 summers working on salmon operations in False Pass and Bristol Bay and have been a full time resident of our state since 1987. I mention this to share that I offer more than just an Alaska school district perspective.

In the 1990s I taught school in the Lower Yukon School District and the Lake and Peninsula School District (LPSD). I served as LPSD's Curriculum Coordinator for 3 years and then as their Superintendent for 7.5 years. I now begin my fifth year as Superintendent of the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District (KPBSD). In sum, my rural and large district experience as well as my understanding of Alaska places me in good standing to be considered for membership on this task force. As superintendent I have a good grasp of all functions of a school district. Also of note is that I have good insights into the University of Alaska. I earned my master's and doctorate degrees from this institution, teach courses for UAA's School of Education, and regularly partner on grants with UA.

As to strengths, I am an excellent communicator, have good interpersonal skills, and understand K-12 education and all the nuances that are behind the scenes. I have been actively involved with the legislative end of education for the past 12 years. I am confident that Speaker Chenault, and the other members of the Kenai Delegation can speak to this. Further, I am confident in stating that I have the support of my peers to represent K-12 on this task force.

Finally, I can bring real time examples and anecdotes from LPSD and KPBSD to the task force. My extensive network among the K-12 education community also allows me to quickly gather financial, curriculum, or facilities information from around the state to support the conversation.

3. Have you been a member of another task force before? If the answer is yes, please provide additional information.

No

4. What's your view about the public education system in Alaska?

To start, I believe that public education is fundamental and the backbone of our state. As such, I feel that the future of Alaska is dependent on a strong public education system whose graduates are prepared to be successful in a dynamic world. The good news is that Alaska is small enough to make improvements at a relatively fast rate. The bad news is that much of our schools' established practices are outdated and unfortunately, ingrained in the system. A further issue is the varied demographics and geographic challenges of our state. No other state can claim the same challenge of how to equitably and adequately serve students from the far reaches of the Arctic to the multicultural schools of Anchorage.

When you review the state's student results, e.g., test scores, graduation rate, you will find that there is some general improvement, but you can quickly conclude that it is unlikely that Alaska will soon be recognized as the country's leader in education. So, what to do? First off, I hope that the task force can provide recommendations to help districts see beyond the limitations that federal control of education has placed, and to instead refocus on those practices that are producing results for our state's students. While I don't feel that we have to start afresh, I do feel that Alaska needs to rethink how it addresses those variables that are limiting our students' success. While some of these variables are beyond the scope of K-12, the state can provide support and guidance for many of these (see question 8). This can be done with grant support for innovative practices that should include improvements to the non-instructional side of education. Although such issuance of grants is currently occurring, e.g., state support of regional education centers in rural Alaska, I feel that the state should do more to recognize and then promote strategies that are addressing these limiting variables.

I feel that it is time to unleash some of that which constrains school districts from improving (see question 5). I am confident in stating that the vast majority of educators in Alaska are working hard to make improvements to meet the learning needs of their students. I feel however, that there needs to be structural changes as well as an increased receptivity to innovation. A review of the highest performing districts in our country shows schools that are rewarded for innovation.

5. In your view, are Alaskan public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

Before I can respond to this question I would like to first state that the structure of public education is such, that by definition, schools require additional monies each year. That is, the fixed costs of labor contracts, health care, energy, utilities and other services increase each year. Therefore, to maintain what was in place the previous year requires more funds. K-12 education is thus, forced to work within a well-defined structure that in a sense, has us trapped. We can

offer the same service as we did last year for more money or we can reduce service for the same amount of money received this year. It is critical that this understanding is in place before debating whether schools are adequately funded. I understand the need to contain costs and feel that my district has worked hard to do so. Nevertheless, my district's budget increases each year because of the above mentioned structure. The immediate response to this question is no, given the mentioned structure of education, schools are not adequately funded. If they were, then districts would be able to maintain their level of service and not be forced to make reductions. A further consideration is that the cost of education for Alaska's small, rural districts will always be high. There is no way to avoid the extreme costs of for example, flying heating oil to a village school.

The long term answer to this question is that schools in Alaska are adequately funded (an enormous amount of money is spent on the state's 130,000 students). I feel that it should be possible to rethink how some of the K-12 money is spent. I believe that there are efficiencies that can be found to ensure that state funds do not need to be increased at the current demanded rate each year. With that stated, education is a people business. The recurring cost of personnel for districts is by far their largest expenditure. For example, KPBSD devotes 82% of its expenditures to personnel. K-12 needs to take a hard look at how it staffs schools and to then determine whether there are creative options for doing more with less. The limited capacity of Alaska makes such changes problematic as does the small size of many of our schools and districts.

The task force will also have to wrestle with the issue of adequacy and equity. What is the state's vision for school in a remote rural Alaska village? How do we ensure that all of Alaska's students are college and career ready after graduating from high school?

6. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?

Increasing the BSA will, in the short term, solve some financial problems (see response to question 5). I believe however, that a long term fiscal plan for education that includes a modest increase to the BSA should be contingent on making some fundamental changes to the structure of education (see question 5). Districts need to know their level of funding during their budget cycle that typically ends in March. The current practice of budgeting with unknown levels of revenue prevents long term planning. A schedule of modest BSA increases should be established so that districts can adequately plan for the coming years. But, this should not happen until some of the aforementioned structural changes are made.

I feel however, that BSA increases should not be made unless districts are demonstrating that they are improving through changed or innovative practices (see question 4). The task force must provide recommendations for how the state's small districts can increase their capacity to make necessary changes. It is not enough to simply legislate that all district will do this. With that stated, it makes no sense to increase the funding for systems that are not making progress.

7. What, in your opinion, is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?

I believe that the state should continue to bear the main responsibility for funding schools and that the required local contribution should not be reduced. I state this because I feel that it is

important for the local residents to have some ownership in their schools. The REAAs should continue to devote 90% of their federal Impact Aid monies to offset their lack of tax revenue.

I would like the state to consider developing a dedicated funding source for education. The task force should review different funding models from around the country including the creation of an education foundation and reinstating the employment tax that was in place before oil revenues became the primary source of state revenue. This morning's Anchorage Daily News included an article on the financial impact of the proposed Pebble Mine. Mentioned, was that the majority of earnings from the Bristol Bay salmon fishery go to non-residents. The advantage of an employment tax is that thousands of non-residents would be helping to pay for the cost of Alaska public education. Such a source of revenue for public education would increase the local level of interest in our schools and in turn, raise expectations. Without ownership, or "skin in the game" it is more likely that there will be an acceptance of the status quo.

As to the state contribution for education, I feel that there should be expectations that districts are making the best use of their state monies. The current requirement that 70% of expenditures are dedicated to instruction is not the way to do this. Instead, the task force should examine indicators of quality e.g., the seven education criteria for performance excellence that is a part of the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program or the Quality Learning School Self-assessment (Langford International), that could be used to assure the public that the investment in education is used wisely. If these indicators are not being met, then the state would provide targeted assistance.

8. What are some ideas, if any, that you think could improve public education in Alaska in general?

My response to question 4 and 5 provides context for some of what I feel needs to happen to improve public education. Unless some of the constraints of the described structure are loosened, public education will continue to be stuck in a vortex that requires more money to do the same. I feel that the legislature can undo some of the structure e.g., have the state take over health care for state K-12 employees. As mentioned, improvements to education must address those variables that are limiting our students' success in school. The following four variables can be addressed with state level support.

- a. Early literacy. I believe that the acquisition of literacy by our primary students is the most important activity of school. Without these skills, a student's education is compromised resulting in the student being in constant state of catch up. The task force needs to wrestle with how best to provide early childhood education and how best to ensure acquisition of literacy for our students. The state should continue to promote best practices to help students acquire literacy skills. An example of a best practice is the Scaffolding Early Learning project from McREL. The program's good results for students who are second language English speakers or are in language transition suggests it would be effective with similar students in Alaska.
- b. Limited capacity and local control. As mentioned in question 6, the limited capacity of our small school districts to implement required improvements is a challenge that needs to be addressed. The task force should explore ways to help the smaller districts increase their capacity to make such improvements. This could include the state facilitating the

sharing of services and by offering a comprehensive level of support. It is easy to make legislative or regulatory changes that are designed to improve education. Implementing these changes in our small districts is often a challenge.

One of the strengths of education in Alaska is that local control determines much of what occurs in a school district. There are however, limitations to this ideal of local control, particularly for our smallest districts. Suggestion: examine the ideal of local control and where necessary, have the state offer standard ways to perform required tasks. For example, all districts are responsible for a teacher evaluation system. There is no reason why there isn't a standard system for the state that a district could adopt. It is absurd that each district is now going through the expensive process of researching and then developing its own evaluation system. It is my experience that many of our districts are not large enough or have the capacity to adequately conduct this sort of exercise.

- c. Organizational Excellence- There are many in education who eschew business practices as not immediate to school systems. While I agree that schools are different than business, I know that some of the standard practices of business can be applied to education. I would like the task force to provide a recommendation that will help districts determine their level of organization quality by using for example, the Baldrige Performance Excellence Program for such an assessment. This summary of district status on the 7 indicators of quality would provide a base point for improvement strategies. For example, one of the assessed indicators is whether there is adequate strategic planning to guide improvements. In our quest to improve, we are often overly concerned with programmatic fixes that do not address the underlying issue of organizational inefficiencies.

Students with Adverse Childhood Effects. One of the statistics that I boast about here on the Kenai is that our graduation rate is well above the state average. I am pleased that more than 80% of our students receive diplomas after four years of high school. Our five year average is 83%. While it is good to be above average, the other side of this statistic is that far too many of our students do not graduate after four or five years. When I look closely at those students who do not graduate, I find that a portion of them have poor attendance and a lengthy discipline record. The simple adage if you are not in school you will not learn is immediate to this portion of our students. Although there is no effort to turn a blind eye to poor behavior, we are beginning to rethink how we react to a student making poor choices.

For the past several years neuroscientists have researched the effects of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) on a child's brain development. The research shows that toxic stress, e.g., abuse or neglect, in a child's early years reduces brain plasticity and hence, lowers the affected child's ability to learn. Further, the research shows that those children affected by ACEs are more likely to engage in risky behaviors including underage sex and drug use. I am pleased that our schools do as good a job as they do in responding to these behaviors, but know that we need to do more to help our staff understand and then appropriately respond to some behaviors that are beyond the student's control. The work that is being done with such students at Lincoln Alternative High School in Walla Walla WA and more generally, in the state of Washington, is

commendable and deserves Alaska's attention. I believe a greater understanding of ACEs will help a portion of Alaska's failing students find success at school. I have been in touch with the Governor's office on this and know that several agencies in the state are working to create a greater awareness of this. Although some might view training staff to better respond to children affected by ACEs as secondary to K-12 education, I feel that it is a mistake not to do so. While support of this education might be better suited to the Health and Social Services Department (HSS), I feel that education should work in tandem with HSS to help our state's educators better understand how to successfully work with students affected by ACEs.

9. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for their time and work. If appointed, how much time would you able to devote?

As mentioned above, my school board is supportive of my membership on this task force. My job of course has various commitments that make the early scheduling of dates an imperative for me. I am confident that I will devote the necessary amount of time to make my membership valued.

10. Please provide any other information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of this Task Force.

Thank you for considering me for one of the two educator positions on the task force; I would be honored to serve the people of Alaska in this way.

Andy Baker

Native Alaskan

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1. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

I would like to help the education system evolve in both rural and urban Alaska

2. What strengths and/or skills would you bring to the task force?

Strong organizational and leadership and vast rural knowledge

3. Have you been a member of another task force before? If the answer is yes, please provide additional information.

Current member of the Governor's Advisory committee to the Rural Sub Cabinet

4. What's your view about the public education system in Alaska?

There are definitely areas to improve

5. In your view, are Alaskan public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

I do not think it is all about funding, I think that first you must look at the delivery and effectiveness and follow that with funding

6. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?

I think it is a much bigger issue than just the BSA

7. What, in your opinion, is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?

I think there are many options that need to be explored

8. What are some ideas, if any, that you think could improve public education in Alaska in general?

Being able to provide courses needed and relevant to the students' interest and job goals and allowing them to go where they need to to get it

9. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for their time and work. If appointed, how much time would you be able to devote?

As I am self-employed I have as much time as needed as long as it is productive to give it

10. Please provide any other information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of this Task Force.

I am very interested in helping to improve our educational system for our students. I am a strong and decisive leader that will push.

Lynn Bannon

Educator

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1. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

I would like to be on this task force because I believe that I can be a valuable resource. I can accomplish this by listening carefully and sharing my many years of experience with education in Alaska. Few people today have the experience of being educated in territorial schools, State Operated Schools, and in the Anchorage School District. I have watched the most recent legislative hearings on North 360. I also regularly watched the Anchorage School District board meetings.

2. What strengths and/or skills would you bring to the task force?

Although I've never taught in rural Alaska, I spent eleven years teaching in the Elitnaurvik Within East program at East High School. This is a school-within-a-school for Alaska Native and Native American students. Most of the students were from rural Alaska. I ran my classroom like a village school where family members felt welcomed and visited frequently. Many parents and other relatives spent time visiting and sharing their knowledge with the students. I had long and thoughtful discussions with them about the schools in their villages and towns. They told me about what they thought worked and didn't work. Their thoughts were integrated into my lessons.

I'm an excellent listener and am accustomed to interacting with people from many different cultures. East High School is the largest and most diverse school in Alaska. I'm receptive to new ideas and am not fixated in a particular point of view. I am able to defuse volatile situations and abrasive and angry public members. I was selected to conduct public meetings when the Anchorage School District decided to close three local elementary schools. Their unfortunate methodology pitted one neighborhood against another. Allocation of Funding among schools in Alaska can bring about a similar angst among the competing geographical regions and interests.

3. Have you been a member of another task force before? If the answer is yes, please provide additional information.

Not Guilty. I've not served on a state task force.

4. What's your view about the public education system in Alaska?

I believe that the citizens of Alaska want the state to help fund a viable educational system that produces measureable results while meeting the expectations of students, parents and community members. Not a good system if standards are met, yet families are provided a top-down, take-it-or-leave-it management style. Most voters, like parents, want reasonable oversight that will reveal waste and lack of student achievement. Giving school districts every dollar they request will not insure positive results, any more than giving every child \$100 for each lunch will insure good nutrition. This is a difficult balance between local responsibility and that of the state.

5. In your view, are Alaskan public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

I believe that the real problem is how the funds are allocated. The judicial decision most recently pointed to several rural schools in southwest Alaska and ordered improvements. Obviously, Alaska is unique because there are so many variations on how the education is being delivered. Due to this a standard formula may actually take all of these variations into account, but it will be seen by the public as not connected to their local situation. I would like to make the system of allocation the funds to the classrooms based on the need of the classroom more transparent. The goal should never be to spend less, or spend more, it should be to educate students and make them life-long learners and involved citizens. I recognize that the current system can foster ill-feelings among regions and competing interests and doesn't achieve equity according to the real needs. I would also like to review the paperwork required by the DEED. How much is it costing each district, is every report valuable and could some systems be streamlined with LCLB reports.

6. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?

Increasing the funding formula will not solve the problems facing the various school districts. If it does produce enough funds, it is an accident. Good intentions do not guaranty good results.

7. What, in your opinion, is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?

No one person can tell you the best way to fund public education. A quality system should be put in place only after many hearings, in-put from professionals and reading the on point research. At that time a system can be put in place with the caveat that it will be subject to constant tweaking.

8. What are some ideas, if any, that you think could improve public education in Alaska in general?

You can improve how funds are allocated by having discussions and input with as many people and officials who are willing to participate. What I saw, during my many years of teaching, was that there was a noticeable difference in the student's performance and skill level according to what school the student had previously attended. This observation was not just that students who came from higher-wealth neighborhoods would automatically be high achievers. No, I observed that students who attended a specific school in the lowest wealth area were meeting all the local, state and federal standards. What this told me was the staff of the successful school developed systems to promote achievement. They did whatever they needed to do with the money they had to have a successful situation. It is important that I make this point, the idea of replicating one program's successful rubric with others is flawed. Every school population is different, every staff has different strengths and administrators have unique leadership styles. A successful program should be presented as a smorgasbord where other schools can choose what will work for their program.

9. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for their time and work. If appointed, how much time would you be able to devote?

I'm willing to spend whatever time it takes as long as it is meaningful in developing a better system in funding education in Alaska. Spending more money will not guarantee a better system.

10. Please provide any other information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of this Task Force.

Born in St. Anne's Hospital in Juneau. Was raised there and in Anchorage and other places in Alaska by a paranoid schizophrenic mother and mostly absent fathers. Lived in a dilapidated house sandwiched between a brothel and an illegal gambling dive in a low-wealth part of town. While attending high school, my bedroom was in a basement that we hand-dug one summer. To get to my sleeping area, had to go outside and around the corner of the house entering the basement by opening a piece of plywood that was used as a door.

Enjoyed the safety of school. Did well academically. Through blind luck and some strong mentoring from teachers, was able to get an excellent university education. Combining Federal Impact loans, working, and help from the Dean of Women at the University of Oregon, I paid for tuition and housing. Was able to complete the Education School's student teaching requirements when my eighth grade English teacher, who happened to be in Eugene taking summer classes, emptied her suitcase and gave me some clothes. Using this education, returned to Anchorage spending my professional life teaching and mentoring mostly high-risk youth for the Anchorage School District.

Education: BA in History, University of Oregon
M.A.T. in Secondary English, Alaska Methodist University

Chris Benshoof

Educator

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1. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

My name is Chris Benshoof and I am Alaska's 2013 State Teacher of the Year; I am writing to submit my name for consideration as an appointed educator representative on the Alaska State House Sustainable Education Task Force. I want to be appointed to this task force because I know that as a successful young teacher it is my responsibility to help support the changing face of education in Alaska. I was born, raised, and educated in Fairbanks, Alaska and I want to do my part to help ensure that the quality education I received remains available and becomes even more successful for future generations. Now, perhaps more than ever, it is crucial that we evaluate the Alaskan educational system with regards to long-term sustainability, and I believe I can be very helpful toward that goal.

2. What strengths and/or skills would you bring to the task force?

As a professional educator in Fairbanks, I have completed my Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics, as well as my Masters in Education with a focus in Curriculum & Instruction. Together, these programs have helped me become an effective teacher and supported my recent success in earning my National Board Certification in Adolescent and Young Adulthood Mathematics education. As a result, I now hold an Alaska Master Teaching Certificate. I have been heavily involved in educational matters at my school and district level, and have been building a state and national perspective over the past year as I have served as the Alaska State Teacher of the Year.

In addition to that education, I am completing a Master of Science degree in Resource and Applied Economics. I have completed coursework in mathematical economics, econometrics, renewable resource economics, nonrenewable resource economics and other topics as part of this program. I know that the discussions and decisions surrounding a sustainable education system will – necessarily – be economic in nature and I have a solid background to draw from and share in this avenue. In order to consider all possibilities for a sustainable future for Alaskan education, it's crucial that we have well-informed educational perspectives as well as research based and well-grounded economic perspectives. I believe that I can bring both of these to the table in an inclusive way. There will be many topics to discuss in our work, and I am happy to hear all sides as I form a rational and informed opinion on the topics at hand.

3. Have you been a member of another task force before? If the answer is yes, please provide additional information.

No, this would be my first opportunity.

4. What's your view about the public education system in Alaska?

I know that teachers and administrators around the state are working very hard to provide the best education they can to a wide range of children. I think that we are currently doing a decent job and that while there are many places that we can improve (e.g. raising the graduation rate, increasing literacy, improving college and career readiness), I also know that there are many

places where the educational system is succeeding admirably. Over the past ten years, our educational system has increased statewide graduation rates and test scores, and has provided opportunities for many students to pursue continuing education across the nation.

I also know that our educational system has the challenge of dealing with students that come from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds. Meeting their varied needs on a regular basis is a struggle for many schools. Our educational system also faces challenges of rising operating costs and the need to attract and retain quality teachers and administrators. Still, I do believe that our system works hard to meet those challenges and has the capacity to continue to improve in all those efforts.

5. In your view, are Alaskan public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

I believe that the Alaskan public schools are adequately funded for the level at which they are performing. However, as we look to our educational system to bring Alaskan students up to a competitive level both academically and for post-secondary careers, I think that additional funding might be needed. That said, I also know that a restructuring of the current systems can likely smooth out some inefficiencies and make it possible to do more with current funding. I think that the two biggest financial challenges are energy costs (for heating and transportation) as well as the rate of inflation. I think that if we are going to expect significant continued growth from our schools, that will likely need to be accompanied by some additional funding, but I also acknowledge that fiscal realities makes that difficult and in many ways nearly impossible at this time. It is clear that our state needs to support and encourage districts to function in a sustainable way.

6. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?

No. While an increase to the base student allocation would be beneficial, I think that real long-term solutions need to come from organizational restructuring, and an increased emphasis on the talent and abilities that already exist within the system. I believe that inflation will naturally lead to a higher cost to education, but that long-term improvements and solutions in education already exist within our communities and employees; we just need to find a way to encourage their growth.

7. What, in your opinion, is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?

I believe that the best funding solutions come through a combination of state funding and local funding. Community partnerships with business can help support small programs, but the basic functioning of schools needs to be funded through a balanced system of state and local sources. I do not know the statewide situation well enough yet to be able to comment specifically on different situations, but I know that a funding system which is predictable at least one or two years out would alleviate a tremendous burden on many districts. Knowing what funding was going to be available 12 or 24 months ahead would make it possible for district administrators to make sustainable decisions about curriculum purchases, building upgrades, and building maintenance as well. I do believe that whatever funding system is in place, it needs to give districts the ability to plan at least a year or two in advance. In doing so, I trust that they can help support the sustainability of the system as a whole.

8. What are some ideas, if any, that you think could improve public education in Alaska in general?

I think the greatest untapped resource we have in our schools are teacher leaders. Currently, informal leaders emerge within some schools to help guide decision-making and support the professional growth of new teachers and administrators. I think that we could greatly improve public education by supporting and encouraging teacher leaders. This could be through the official recognition of National Board Certification and Alaska State Master Teacher Certification, stipends for defined teacher leader duties, and the long-term creation of an Alaskan teacher leader corps. This group would not need to travel extensively as the recent Statewide Mentoring program functioned, but rather would include teachers across the state in a community of excellent teachers.

These teachers could be called upon for their leadership in running professional development, teaching distance delivery education courses through the Alaska Staff Development Network or similar venue, act as mentor teachers for University of Alaska student teachers, and help guide instructional decisions in their schools, districts, and state. By formalizing this group of high quality professionals – that already exist in our schools – we can better position ourselves for the coming challenges. Changes like implementing the new Alaska State Standards, getting students ready for a new statewide common assessment, and rolling out new teacher evaluation systems can all be made easier, more efficient, and less costly through a supported teacher leader corps.

9. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for their time and work. If appointed, how much time would you be able to devote?

As a full time graduate student and full time teacher, I know that my time is limited. If appointed to this committee, I would be happy to commit approximately 12 hours a week to reading, researching, and discussing the topics at hand. In addition, if any travel was necessary for meetings outside of Fairbanks that is something I could fit into my schedule as they arose.

10. Please provide any other information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of this Task Force.

On the following page I have included an abbreviated resume of my education, work, and professional experience to help give you a better picture of who I am and the perspectives I have. A more complete resume can be downloaded at <http://www.mrbenshoof.com/resume.pdf> if you would like it. Of course, if you have further questions for me, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for taking the time to consider me as an appointee for this task force. I would love the opportunity to share my expertise and be a part of this tremendously important task.

Michelle Brown

Businessperson

Email: mbrown@ak.org

United Way of Anchorage

907.263.3820

1. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

I fear that that we are shortchanging our future by treating education as if we were drowning. We thrash our arms and legs wildly, expend a lot of effort, but don't always move forward.

United Way of Anchorage has spearheaded a community-based approach for better educational outcomes. Known as 90% graduation by 2020, it changes both what we work on and how we work on it. 90% by 2020 links the schools, families, and community providers to far more intentionally support each child to reach a series of academic benchmarks, from cradle to career. The approach is twofold: (1) a disciplined, data driven collaboration that integrates schools, businesses, government, community providers, faith organizations, families, etc. around shared measurable goals, shared accountability, and mutually reinforcing and coordinated strategies and; (2) mobilizes the entire community to get engaged in preparing our youth for success. This is a major departure from the approach of serial piecemeal reforms, investments in siloed programs and series, and ideological battles.

We have been working on this for several years and many needles are moving in the right direction. For instance, the one-time graduation rate has gone from 60% to 73%. The work is driven by goals, data, and outcomes. Once people come together around goals, and openly share data, they can then more rationally and effectively allocate their respective efforts and resources. As the boots on the ground, day in-day out, working this, we would appreciate being part of the discussion for future policy decisions that will have significant impact on our ability to keep our momentum strong.

2. What strengths and skills would you bring to the task force?

Our strength and skill is our deep involvement in all aspects of what it takes for our children to succeed. Making sure our youth graduate, ready for career and college, is too complex to achieve with any single approach or entity alone. That's what motivated businesses, faith groups, the Anchorage School District, service organizations, police, and others to change business as usual in Anchorage. Our strength is that we lead with goals and outcomes, not budgets or investments. We coordinate our respective efforts around the goal and collectively set out a path to implement shared strategies that tackle the issues from all sides. Then we determine the level of resources needed to get it done.

I can contribute the shared wisdom of the 30 member business and community 90% by 2020 Leadership Team and the fifty plus other organizations and entities participating in the effort, as well as the 24 business and community leaders on the United Way of Anchorage Board of Directors.

3. Have you been a member of another task force before? If the answer is yes, please provide additional information.

About 13 years ago related to oil transportation.

4. What's your view about the public education system in Alaska?

Originally, public schools were created to make sure everyone had full and ample opportunity for a great education. And schools were publicly funded because it was clear back then, and remains clear today, that everything we want and need for our kids, our families, our businesses, our economy, and the health of our community all depends upon our firm commitment to launch each generation as well.

Access and quality for all remains our core belief but what it takes to provide that is dramatically different than it was when America started our public schools system. Dramatically different in the skill sets of teachers and students: An educated workforce able to excel in a network based global economy today must have a much deeper knowledge base and the ability to adapt and innovate in ways unimaginable back then. And, dramatically different in delivery: Providing that level of education to all is exponentially more complex. Huge changes in our demographics, diversity, languages, technology, socio-economic circumstances, poverty, attitudes, and more necessitate radical changes in what we need to do to make sure all young people become well-educated and well-prepared young adults.

We've put a lot of expectations on the schools that they can do it all. If our kids aren't achieving, we fear the schools are failing. It is true that the schools need to step it up. We must set rigorous proficiency standards for students and high professional standards for teachers. Schools must be accountable. But families and the whole community must likewise step up. The research is quite compelling: A child's chance of academic success is as much, if not more, determined by experiences and influences out-of-school than in-school. Even perfect schools cannot educate children who fail to attend, lack the skills and attitudes to tune in, or are distracted by hunger, homelessness or worse. We need to reenergize the public in the public education system.

5. In your view, are Alaskan public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

I cannot say. Because we do not have a clear set of measurable outcomes and a cohesive strategy to get there, funding remains a shot in the dark approach to getting results.

6. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?

There are no single solutions. Money is a means to an end. Until we move beyond framing education predominantly by budget decisions, we will not make sufficient progress.

7. What, in your opinion, is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?

Let's challenge our traditional assumptions and work differently, driven by data and proven best practices instead of ideology or pet beliefs. For example, let's stop debating whose fault it is – the schools, teachers, families – and get to work improving it all using data for continuous improvement.

Let's stop debating which is the "right" or most important point, be it pre-K or university. It takes at least 18 years of consistent, steady progress for a child to successfully reach graduation and beyond. There is no one single point in time that will make all of the difference for student success. The research is compelling. To succeed, we have to pay attention to the entire continuum: Our youngest must start school ready to learn. They must attend consistently throughout K-12. They must develop the life skills, attitudes, and behaviors that keep them engaged and open to learning. They must progress steadily academically to meet specific milestones.

Let's stop pretending that there is a budget solution, or single program, or a new reform that's the magic solution. We have been program rich but system poor in how we prepare our youth. The result then has been haphazard and isolated. Each part is important, but standing alone and siloed, it produces isolated or incremental impact at best. We need to collectively get on the same page and get the public far more engaged. Set clear goals and specific strategies; align our efforts; set shared measures; each be accountable for our respective activities; allocate resources to the plan rather than the other way around; and continuously track and improve our progress.

8. What are some ideas, if any, that you think could improve public education in Alaska in general?

See # 7 above

9. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for their time and work. If appointed, how much time would you be able to devote?

I live and breathe this every day, so happy to devote whatever it takes.

10. Please provide any other information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of this Task Force.

These are the academic benchmarks that drive our work:

- Kindergarten readiness
- K-12 school attendance
- Third grade reading and math
- Eighth grade reading and math
- Ninth grade "on track" (credits)
- High school graduation
- Post-secondary enrollment

We deploy a series of strategies in-school to reach these goals, and these are supported, leveraged, and augmented by family and community out-of-school strategies. This is the way we are trying to make sure youth have the right supports that help them develop the skills, attitudes, and behaviors that enable them to engage well in school and that they indeed keep progressing academically.

For more information about 90% by 2020 please see <http://www.liveunitedanchorage.org> and <http://www.90by2020.org>.

I'd like to be part of helping you shape the delivery of improved educational outcomes for the next generation of Alaskans, of which budget analysis and allocation is a key point.

Roger Scott Brown

Email:

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1. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

I want to be appointed to this task force because I have one child in the public school system in Alaska and I have several other children with the potential to go to public school here, in Alaska. I also believe that all students in Alaska, and in all other parts of the world, are our future and we must give them the tools, the knowledge and the motivation to become successful Citizens who can take the reins from us when they are ready.

2. What strengths and/or skills would you bring to the task force?

I bring years of experience as a father, student and business leader. I manage people, some of whom have recently graduated high school here in Alaska. I bring both academic and real world experience to the team and an open mind. I am willing to listen to all sides and come to a consensus based on what is best for the students. I am also new to Alaska and I am not jaded by what I have started to hear about the education system here. I also bring experience from outside the state.

3. Have you been a member of another task force before? If the answer is yes, please provide additional information.

This would be the first task force I will potentially be a part of.

4. What's your view about the public education system in Alaska?

I believe the education system in Alaska needs to look at what is currently working, and expound on that. Whatever isn't working should be overhauled.

5. In your view, are Alaskan public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

I believe the schools are adequately funded, however, I believe that spending is the issue. Are we using the tax dollars in a way that is the most productive? Are we negotiating contracts that favor the schools and more importantly, the students? Does the education system even see that the students are all that really matters when it comes to education? Where are we putting the emphasis?

6. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?

Absolutely not. There may need to be an increase, but assure you that throwing money at a problem does not fix anything. I currently manage projects into the millions of dollars. I have learned that throwing money at a problem just makes it a more expensive problem.

7. What, in your opinion, is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?

I need to do more research about the current funding, but there are two things that most people will not fight a tax increase on. Education and safety. Texas had a huge issue with funding the school districts and they started a lottery system. We have all of the pull tab establishments that fund baseball and softball teams and other areas I am not familiar with, yet I have heard nothing

about them funding the schools, is a lottery the answer? I am not sure, but it could be discussed. 100% of the Texas Lottery proceeds fund the education process in Texas.

8. What are some ideas, if any, that you think could improve public education in Alaska in general?

See number 7. I also have spent time in the schools here in Anchorage and I see teachers who are not highly qualified. In fact, I saw one teacher who was American born to American born parents and my wife, who is from Mexico, spoke better English than this teacher. We can't continue to call teachers highly qualified just because of their education. If we test our students, we should test our teachers — both before the offer letter is delivered and every few years. I also have seen grades on my daughter's report card that were unearned. A teacher should be held accountable for the grades that they give. Holding the school districts accountable is a must.

9. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for their time and work. If appointed, how much time would you be able to devote?

I could devote several hours per month to meetings and more time, as needed, from my office or home for phone calls, emails, and research. I love to do research and am pretty good at finding facts.

10. Please provide any other information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of this Task Force.

I have lived in Alaska for just over a year and have been registered to vote for almost that long. I came here from Texas — the second largest state and another state that has its share of educational problems.

I believe the above speaks for itself. I still take college classes every year to continue my education. I graduated from one of the best high schools in South Carolina and I really do believe that a good education from the public schools is what prepares a student for college and life.

I hope these answers are detailed enough to assist with the decision and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Forest Button

Parent

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1. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

As a father of a student that is currently enrolled in the Anchorage school district it is of utmost importance to me to see him succeed. His ability to attain his career goals start with a solid foundation in education. I strive to give him every opportunity to reach his goals. As State revenue declines and education costs rise I must seek out every possible way to make a difference in his and every other child's educational life. Becoming a part of this task force provides a conduit to making a difference.

2. What strengths and/or skills would you bring to the task force?

I was born, raised, and educated in Alaska. I have watched the face of education change in our State and have not been impressed, particularly in the Anchorage School District. It is easy to sit back and talk about what is wrong or what has gone wrong. I take the proactive approach. Learn from the past but look toward the future. Acknowledge the problem and work toward a solution. I'm educated as an engineer and have been a project manager for many years. My strengths and skill lie in problem solving and facilitating communication between multiple shareholders. When I commit to a project I see it through to the completion of the task.

3. Have you been a member of another task force before? If the answer is yes, please provide additional information.

No I have not participated in any task forces for the State of Alaska or other entities.

4. What's your view about the public education system in Alaska?

My view on the public education system in Alaska is positive. We have a diverse population here in our State with many different cultures. Being sensitive to all while teaching the basic skills needed contribute to our society is a challenge. I know with the right formula in place we can meet the needs of all our students.

5. In your view, are Alaskan public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

I feel that some school districts are over funded and some are underfunded. I think that having a funding formula based on the number of students skews the issue. I'm not sure at this point what the answer is but there is a better way. Let's find it!

6. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?

Increasing the level of the Base Student Allocation (BSA) is a temporary fix that does not address the fundamental problem, nor does it solve the issue long term. Again there is a better approach to funding education we just need to work the issue to a logical conclusion.

7. What, in your opinion, is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?

This is a loaded question. Everybody has a different idea as to where to cut, how to implement, what to measure... There are so many things that could and should be done. I believe the Task Force will come up with some innovative ideas. I offer my idea, however concede it is dead on arrival. I would cap the PFD at \$500.00 per person and take the remainder to fund an educational endowment. Invest it like the PFD and when it becomes self-sustaining reinstate the PFD at normal levels. This would take the funding off the general budget, however it does not solve the fundamental question of what is a fair and equitable way to establish funding levels across the State.

8. What are some ideas, if any, that you think could improve public education in Alaska in general?

Improving education in general State wide does not lend itself to an easy answer. With such a large area and diversity of students what works in one place will not work in another. I do feel and have experienced in the past that the one thing that can make a difference is one on one time with the educator. This applies more at the higher levels; however, overall an educator having the ability to spend more time with each student will make a positive difference.

9. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for their time and work. If appointed, how much time would you be able to devote?

As a member I would not expect compensation as this is a subject that is at the heart of Alaska. Being appointed would be an honor. As our time would be limited I feel I can devote 20 to 30 hours a week to tackling the issues that need to be addressed.

10. Please provide any other information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of this Task Force.

Carolyn C. Cliff

Educator/Native Alaskan

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11. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

I wish to be appointed to the task force because of my extensive background as a mother of three successful children, my experience raising children in a village (Aniak) for over 16 years, my experience as a professional with infant through adult education (more later), my experience working with families and native culture, and my experiences as a teacher. I am retired on the Teacher's Retirement System and want to give back to my community by volunteering for this task force. I have a strong belief in actions over words.

12. What strengths and/or skills would you bring to the task force?

The strength that I bring is a strong commitment to making sure that children receive the best education possible with the limited funds available. I am naturally frugal, as is my husband, who was an administrator with the Kuspuk School District. Besides listening and learning from budget difficulties discussed at the dinner table, I was the administrator/director/bookkeeper for the Aniak Day Care Association for three years. After that, I was the Chapter I (Title 1) "Reading" Federal Grants Administrator for Kuspuk, for 1 ½ years. I know a little bit about budgets, State of Alaska requirements, federal requirements, and working with boards and parents. I have been a special education teacher with Anchorage School District for the last 17 years. My last three years have been with the Alaska Native Cultural Charter School.

13. Have you been a member of another task force before? If the answer is yes, please provide additional information.

I have never been a member of a legislative task force.

14. What's your view about the public education system in Alaska?

I believe that public education can only succeed with the involvement of the parents. I believe that parent involvement can be achieved by giving parents as many choices as possible and encouraging their involvement in their children's education. Realizing that many parents are overwhelmed by their number of children, their jobs, household responsibilities, their language and cultural barriers, and their own negative feelings about school in general, we need to make school an inviting place. We need to encourage volunteers from the broader community, and to encourage at-home learning.

15. In your view, are Alaskan public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

My past experience is that schools were adequately funded, but that is rapidly changing. Administrative and maintenance costs are going up. Veteran teachers cost more than new teachers, but they typically offer more to the success of students than brand new (cheaper) teachers. School districts are cutting support personnel because that's a category that can be cut. Districts are also raising class sizes and eliminating non-classroom personnel. As an NEA union member, I listen to both sides of the bargaining table, but I keep my opinions to myself.

16. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?

I do not believe that increasing the BSA will solve the financial problems of all the public schools in Alaska. We need a different system.

17. What, in your opinion, is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?

Every superintendent is trained in writing grants. Instead of just giving the money to each school district according to the BSA and the daily attendance, it would be better to show what the actual costs are. Some communities spend more money on fuel than others. Some communities hire people from the village to work in the schools, with no accountability or proof that the students are learning. The parents (and their children) need to be held accountable for their students attending school on time and doing the work. School choice is meaningless in a village where the purpose of schools and education is not understood or culturally relevant. In other words, every school should be part of a “charter school” that justifies its own budget. Urban schools in lower socio-economic areas have poor parent involvement and the least experienced teachers. I do have some ideas on this, too.

18. What are some ideas, if any, that you think could improve public education in Alaska in general?

Some of my ideas for improving public education are above. Parents can be responsible for keeping the school running by getting their students to school on time and volunteering in the classrooms, doing maintenance, trading their skills (arts, crafts, hunting, food prep, whatever) to attend “adult education” classes. Offer GEDs/high school diplomas to “drop-outs” (and count them as attendees). If they are over the age of 18, call it “college.” The idea here is to show the importance of life-long learning. Will it be more expensive? No, right now, especially in the rural areas, schools are closing because there are not enough school-age students, and other schools are operating with tiny class sizes in order to hire two teachers at a school. This idea gives the community the opportunity to choose to have a school by choosing to use the school... and showing by their actions that they value education for their children.

19. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for their time and work. If appointed, how much time would you be able to devote?

How much time can I devote to working on this task force? I am retired. The when and where would determine how much time. I live in Anchorage, so if the meetings are here or by teleconference, there’s no problem, I could meet every week. If travel is involved, once a month for a few days would be fine. I prefer not to meet or travel on Friday nights, and I plan to be traveling for 4-6 weeks in mid-September. I will have internet access most of that time.

20. Please provide any other information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of this Task Force.

My qualifications as a member of the task force have been partially addressed. For a more detailed account of my resume’ and adventures, please see the addendum.

I was pregnant when I arrived in Alaska, in 1979, with a B.Ed. and an M. Ed. (Elementary education K-8 and Reading specialist K-12). I was hired to teach a 5-6 combo while my husband taught Reading. (We had both previously taught Title I Reading in Arizona, working

with indigenous, Black, and Hispanic students.) I gave up teaching to have three children, and returned to teaching in January of 1994. In between babies, I was an Adult Education Coordinator for Kuskokwim Community College (one year), traveling between Bethel, Kwethluk, Crooked Creek, and Aniak. I was a part-time Community Health Aide for YKHC (Bethel) and a Community Education coordinator for Kuspuk School District, traveling to Chuathbaluk. I was a founding member of the Aniak Daycare Association board. I was a part-time inservice coordinator and “Writing to Read” coordinator, traveling to all Kuspuk Schools. When the Aniak Daycare ran into financial problems, I volunteered to become the director and childcare grants coordinator for the City of Aniak. We all took classes in Early Childhood Education, and I discovered Early Childhood Special Education courses. I was hired as Kuspuk Chapter I Reading Coordinator (and Teacher) in January 1994 because an out-of-state hire never showed up! In summer 1995, I moved into Anchorage to complete my special education certification. I was hired in 1996 by the Anchorage School District to teach special education, preschool to 6th. After retiring in 2010, I was hired under the “retired-rehired” program to teach/consult at Alaska Native Cultural Charter School, retiring again in May 2013.

Besides my professional experience, I am proud to report that my oldest son, an Aniak High School graduate, is a doctoral candidate at the Mayo University at the Mayo Clinic. He is a graduate of Purdue University and also UAA. My daughter is an MD here in Anchorage. She is a graduate of East (Anchorage) High School, UAA (2 degrees), University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, and the Alaska Family Medicine Residency Program. My youngest son is an intern architect here in Anchorage. He is a GED graduate, certified structural draftsman (UAA), and received Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees at University of Idaho (WUE scholarship). Public schools (even village schools) can be successful.

Jerry Covey

Educator/Businessperson

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907-440-6500

1. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

I have been directly involved in Alaska's public education system since 1976. I care deeply about our public school system and desire to work with legislators and other leaders to improve public education for all Alaskan students.

2. What strengths and/or skills would you bring to the task force?

My career as an educator in Alaska and subsequent consulting experience includes being a K-8 teacher in a one-room school, K-12 principal, associate superintendent, superintendent, Alaska Commissioner of Education, instructor at the University of Alaska Southeast, and providing consulting services for urban and rural school district across the state on a wide range of local and state education policy issues. Additionally, as a parent and grandparent, I have an on-going stake in our public education system.

3. Have you been a member of another task force before?

No

4. What's your view about the public education system in Alaska?

I believe that our system of education offers a viable, affordable, and practical way of educating our children and youth. That said, I believe that adjustments can and should be made in our education system that will translate to improved results for students, families, and Alaskan employers.

5. In your view, are Alaskan public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

The cost of education delivery is outpacing funding increases provided by state and local governments. Essentially, flat funding levels are eroding school districts' ability to deliver the programs students need.

Please see question 6 for more detail on school funding.

6. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?

No. History shows us that regardless of how much money we put into the education system, it still demands more. Our public education system does need additional funding, but it must be used in ways that are directly linked to increased student success.

7. What, in your opinion, is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?

School funding has been the subject of countless finance studies and several lawsuits. We have analyzed Alaska's school-funding system from almost every angle and have made few changes in it over the decades.

The big issues with school funding center around funding equity and the amount of funding allocated by the legislature to school districts. That said, I believe our public education system's greatest challenges lie in other areas. See number 8 below.

8. What are some ideas, if any, that you think could improve education in Alaska in general?

First, I believe putting more authority directly into the hands of parents will translate to improved education for students. Programs that expand choice within the public system such as education vouchers – that must be used in schools that meet all requirements of the public school system – would allow parents to access education opportunities for their students that are currently unavailable to them.

Second, when and how education is delivered has remained largely unchanged in the United States for over 100 years. Our commitment to educating students, the level of support and expectation we have for the workforce, and the education delivery model are not meeting the needs of students, expectation of parents, nor adequately preparing many students for entry into post high-school education or entry into the workforce.

Third, fresh approaches to education delivery, parental engagement, workforce development, educator accountability, length and time of schooling, the structure of schooling, and resource commitments for education must be developed and implemented. Our state education system needs to develop the capability and capacity to better respond to the education challenges and opportunities available in Alaska.

9. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for time and work. If appointed, how much time would you be able to devote?

As a business owner, I am in a position to arrange my work in a way that will allow me to fulfill my commitment to the work of this important task force.

10. Please provide any other information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of this Task Force.

Rural education has always been a primary interest of mine. I have been studying rural education for several years and have written several reports and articles on the challenges of educating students in rural Alaska. I have also worked independently and on behalf of clients to support legislation that addresses the needs of rural school districts and students.

Danalyn Dalrymple

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907-745-6332

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in Alaska's education conversation. As mom/stepmom/foster mom to six and grandmother to "almost" seven, education is a foremost concern for my family. I have one son who attends Butte Elementary, our foster son attends Palmer Junior Middle School, and our daughter graduated from Palmer High School in 2012. She attended her first year of college in Switzerland and is transferring back to UAA this fall. My older stepsons attended Chugiak schools and UAA. Education at all levels plays an important part of our life.

Professionally, I have my own law practice in downtown Palmer and practice in the areas of business, corporate and real estate law. My practice has grown from one employee to three employees/contractors over the past two years. I have served on the Mat-Su Board of Equalization and as a hearing officer for the borough Office of Administrative Hearings. Currently, I am serving my second year on the Board of the Palmer Chamber of Commerce and act as treasurer. I am a member of the Supervisory Committee of the Matanuska Valley Federal Credit Union.

The costs of education cannot be considered in a vacuum. I believe investment in early childhood development and K-12 education results in cost-savings later in life in other social service areas including low income assistance, drug and alcohol programs, domestic violence and child abuse, and justice system demands. I'm a proponent of year-round school or the availability of summer programs for the same reasons. If we provide high quality education to our children they will be incentivized to bring their own families back to Alaska and contribute to its growth and success. Education should be Alaska's number one priority since positive results will have a direct impact on our economy and each of our employment sectors. Every school should have access to library resources and library education, every school should have a music and physical education program, and every school should have reasonably up-to-date technology. Technology should be used to supplement teacher and staff resources. These resources are part of a basic education and teach kids what they really need to know how to lead balanced lives and generate enthusiasm for self-learning.

Schools can always improve. I considered my own high school education to be lacking and never thought to return to Idaho to raise my family. My basic education was supplemented by my own desire for knowledge, undergraduate programs and law school. Recently, however, my alma mater, Firth High School, was ranked as the fourth top high school in the state of Idaho. It took twenty years for that improvement and a significant shift in priorities to achieve national recognition but students coming from that program now are primed for success at a national level.

Being self-employed, I enjoy the ability to regularly participate with my kids in local activities, volunteer my time in my own discretion, and would be able to participate in task force events as necessary. I've attached my resume for your consideration.

Patsy DeWitt

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As a small business owner and member of the NFIB, I am interested in being a member of the Alaska State House Sustainable Education Task force. If we are going to be discussing how to move our Educational system from a early 20th century model to a 21st century model graduating all students nurturing the innovation and critical thinking skills that have made our country great, I know I would be honored to be part of this. If this task force is to discuss how we are going to fund the same old system I would not be your person.

I believe the ability to critically think is the linchpin to our society and education should be the vehicle for honing that ability. When my kids were born, I knew I wanted them to grow to be self-sufficient, contributing members of society. I spent my time raising them to be the adults they are today. People tell me I am so lucky to have such wonderful adult children. Luck had little to do with it. We worked hard to achieve this goal.

I have been involved with Education all my life, as a student, a mom, a volunteer and a businessperson. I have seen the system close-up and have been able to identify what is working and what is not working. I cannot say I have a grand plan to fix it all, but I know we need to do something and this task force is giving me hope that we can work together for our children.

My involvement and understanding of school systems began when I had the good fortune to be able to be a stay-at-home mom. I knew schools needed help so I volunteered many hours in elementary, middle and high school. I was your field trip mom, need help on the playground - I was there. I was the PTO President for three years at Floyd Dryden Middle School. I served on the school site council and the district site council. When my kids were in a school within a school program, the Phoenix Program at Juneau Douglas High School (JDHS), I was the President of the Phoenix parent group for five years. After my kids graduated from high school, the principal asked if I was willing to come help rebuild the Career Center at Juneau Douglas High School left in a shambles by the previous Career Center Aid. I did that for one year and then as a volunteer helped create a four-year career path program. I was asked by the principal to attend the statewide Annual Vocational Education get-together to talk about what we were doing at JDHS. I am most proud of having put together a career day, which was based on the previous concept of a "college day," except during career day, freshmen could come and talk with members in our community about jobs and what skills are needed for those jobs. The community members were excited to see a program like this offered, and it is still a part of Juneau's high school program.

I was appointed to the State School Board of Education by Governor Murkowski and served for 4 years. We had started down the path to excellent education for all but 4 years was not enough.

I think in 1993 when Alaska started developing standards - things we thought all kids should know to be successful adults - we were going in the right direction. The State has done a great job developing these standards and assessments but we have not always done a good job at how a student learns them. We continue to want each subject to be "stand alone" and not integrated

into the total education experience. English should be a thread used in all subjects so students can see the benefit.

One of main frustrations with our current system is that we think all children develop at the same pace. I have raised four kids and not one of them walked, talked or was potty trained at the exact same age. Why is it we can accept that not every kid does these things at a specific age but we want our students from age 5 to 9 to be exact replicas of one another. Maybe we should look at students in those ages as being in groups according to what they know and how they apply it. As soon as they master a concept we know they have the basic building blocks to learning down and they move to the next group. Then we move them on to the next concept.

We need to help our students figure out what they might like doing as adults. People may not like it but, the fact of the matter is, most people today have to work. Too many kids get to their senior year of high school without a clue about what they want to do with the next 70 years of their lives. Shouldn't we be helping them?

We cannot continue to throw more money at the problem using the same methods. Over the past ten years (2003 to 2013), the BSA has gone from \$4010 to \$5680. What improvements have we seen for the 141% increase? In the 1990's, the Alaska Legislature passed a law stating 70% of the BSA had to be spent on direct classroom instruction. This seemed like a good idea but I do not think it is working. When I was on the State Board of Education, one of our biggest frustrations was the waiver request from school districts to go below the 70% requirement. All of these waivers were requested for valid reasons (e.g., increased price of heating oil, costs of replacing broken boiler, etc.). Children cannot be educated in dilapidated buildings with no heat, especially during the winter. Although it was reasonable to grant these waivers, in the end it voided the ultimate intent behind the 70% requirement.

During the last legislative session, I followed the progress of some legislation that gave me hope that there are better ways to do things that might result in a sustainable education-funding model. For example, I hope the pupil transportation-funding bill (HB 120) passes and people will see it helps education. Those dollars should not go into the classroom and pretending they should does no one any good. Other legislation that I hope the legislature will explore further is SB 90, relating to school district employee health insurance. Looking at options for creative ways to pool resources and ensure that school districts can focus on their expertise, teaching our children, is the direction we should be moving.

One of the major costs that we need to get under control involves the school buildings. Looking back again to the 1990's, the Alaska Legislature wanted to create a template for a public school building. We may not need a template but we need to decide what a functional school building costs and that is what the districts should get in state reimbursement. Local districts can add all the bells and whistles they want, so long as local citizens want to pay for them. Because in the end what matters is what skills the children are absorbing and able to perform, which can occur in many different types of settings. The hole in the wall computer experiment done by Dr. Sugata Mitra in India has shown us that.

Apart from funding, from my 20 years volunteering and my time on the State Board of Education, I know we need to change the way we educate our children. Without changes to the form of education, all the money in the world will not solve the problem. We have created an education system that mimics industrial factories, instead of nurturing the innovation and critical thinking skills that have made our country great. We still have the mindset that everyone needs to go to college and only losers become auto mechanics, miners, or appliance repairmen. We need critical thinkers that know what they want to do to be self-sufficient, contributing members of our society -- whether that be a PhD in neuroscience or a plumber.

When thinking about education styles that work, I think about my first experience with my son's fourth grade teacher in Fairfax, Virginia. She was a GT teacher that felt what she used with those GT students could also be used in a regular classroom. When the class did a study of bugs, each student picked a bug and learned about the bug while also learning how to research and write a paper. For the final culmination of the project, each student came dressed as the bug he or she researched and brought food that represented the bug. It was a great integrated, fun learning experience. There are many more examples of how she made learning fun and applied it to life skills.

Then when my kids were in high school, JDHS created the Phoenix Program. It was an integrated curriculum using technology. There were no grades; you were told "start over," "needs improvement," "met expectations," or "exceeded expectations." The goal was for every student to meet the expectations by showing they knew the subject and could apply it.

In education, one of the problems with trying something new is people tend to oppose change and are afraid of doing things differently. I got to see the ugly side of teachers during this experience. Many of the teachers in the "regular high school" hated the program and did everything they could to undermine it. It only lasted five years because when the principal who supported the program left, it was first on the chopping block. Luckily for me, our three youngest kids participated in the program before it ended.

The students in the Phoenix Program had to do two big projects a year that used interdisciplinary skills. One of the projects was, "What could you do to improve Juneau?" There were four boys in the program who were more interested in skate boarding than school, so they decided Juneau needed a skateboard park. They had to design it, go through the permitting process, figure out how they would finance it, and ultimately articulate why it would help Juneau to a panel of judges from the community. After they finished the class project and got a "met expectations" grade, they decided to make their class project into a reality. Today, Juneau has a skateboard park, and these young men learned the value of an education. I could go on and on about the good things I saw come out of this integrated program, but most importantly, I learned what could happen if we were willing to change the paradigm of our education system.

We need to help our students figure out what they might like doing as adults. People may not like it but, the fact of the matter is, most people today have to work. Too many kids get to their senior year of high school without a clue about what they want to do with the next 70 years of their lives. Shouldn't we be helping them? JDHS decided they would have a half hour period the same time once a week for the students to examine possible career opportunities. The French

teacher did not want to deal with it so I was asked to teach her class. I had mostly seniors, and one particular student really stood out to me. She thought she might want to be a psychologist and when we looked at her academics she had not taken any classes that would qualify her for college. Since she was a senior, there wasn't much we could do. During this class, I also spent time talking to them about how much they would need to spend on housing, clothing, food, and entertainment. I also talked about making choices. Some people really do not want or need many "things." Others like lots of "things." In order to make successful choices, young people need to figure out how they are going to afford them. These are all skills that make a child successful in life and should be integrated with our teaching methods.

When you show a student what school can get you (i.e., career, job, income), school becomes more relevant. Now that my children are grown, during the summer I work as a vessel agent for cruise ships and happen to work with a lot of recent high school graduates. Some are going to college and others are not. This job gives these kids skills that will last a lifetime but I often think they should have gotten them in school. You have to show up on time, look presentable, and sometimes you have to do something that is not to your liking. I am constantly reminding them we are all the face of Cruise Line Agencies, and they learn that if they stay out late the night before, they must still show up and be ready to work regardless.

There is a young man who has been there for four years. He did not do well in school and he needed the job just so he could survive. When he first started work at Cruise Line Agencies, he was in a rut. He had tattoos (which he has to cover up), had plugs in his ears and smoked. Some of us older adults that worked with him saw his potential and encouraged him to seek something more out of life. Recently, he decided to stop smoking, take out his earplugs and go to college. It has been great to see the transformation but why did he have to hit rock bottom in order to see a way out.

Our children should not have to wait until they are failing as adults to figure out why school is important and learn those life skills that we all need regardless of the career we choose. We, as a state, need to decide what is required to educate our kids to become self-sufficient, contributing members. I came to this conclusion when I was on the State Board of Education dealing with the issue of home schooling and funding -- I was and am supportive of the home school parents so long as we are truly serving the customer, the student.

There was a family who wanted the state to pay for horseback riding because their daughter liked riding horses. I suggested that if they could create an integrated curriculum focusing on horses, it should be supported by the state program. I tried to explain how their daughter could satisfy her science, history, English and math requirements by looking at how horses have been used throughout history. There was also an opportunity to delve into anatomy, diseases, and nutrition requirements. Unfortunately, in the end, the parent was not interested in the educational advantages. She just wanted her daughter to be able to ride a horse at state expense. Horseback riding lessons for the sake of horseback riding are the parent's responsibility, not the state education system.

I also think that we need to focus on those kids who come to school already behind. How do we help them get on track? When I was the president of the PTO Group in middle school, I will

never forget the Native Alaskan parent who said, “You know, when a child is born no parent ever thinks his or her child is going to fail.” This is so true. Our task is to focus on what happens and how can we fix it.

To get these children on track, I do not believe that we have to mandate preschool to fix the problem. I recently read a book *How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character* by Paul Tough. Below is a quote:

“But in the past decade, and especially in the past few years, a disparate congregation of economists, educators, psychologists, and neuroscientists have begun to produce evidence that calls into question many of the assumptions behind the cognitive hypothesis. What matters most in a child’s development, they say, is not how much information we can stuff into her brain in the first few years. What matters, instead, is whether we are able to help her develop a very different set of qualities, a list that includes persistence, self-control, curiosity, conscientiousness, grit, and self-confidence.”

This may not be the end all be all answer but we need to try and figure out how All Kids will succeed.

For all these reasons and so many more, I hope to serve on the Alaska State House Sustainable Education Task Force as a businessperson, a parent, a community member, and a citizen. I am ever hopeful and optimistic that if we open our minds and think outside the preconceived "education box," we can achieve results and better serve our children.

The only time I will not be available is September 25 – October 14.

LaDawn Druce

Educator

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1. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

I would like to serve on the task force in order to help shape policy to improve public education in our state.

2. What strengths and/or skills would you bring to the task force?

My extensive experience as a public school teacher, the work I have been involved in with my district and the state would be an asset to the task force. I also work well with adults and have excellent written and verbal communication skills.

3. Have you been a member of another task force before?

If the answer is yes, please provide additional information. No, I have not been a member of a legislative task force.

4. What's your view about the public education system in Alaska?

Overall, I feel we have a strong public education system. We have very diverse communities in Alaska and serving all students' needs can be quite challenging. As educators we are always looking for ways to improve and Alaska's public schools can and should improve.

5. In your view, are Alaskan public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

I believe our schools are well funded, however the recent trend to not increase the base student allocation does give me concern. With the cost of education continuing to rise, it is becoming increasingly more difficult for districts to adequately fund education. In order to put monies into keeping class sizes low, there are fewer funds for supplemental projects and electives often vital to engaging students in education.

6. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?

Increasing the BSA would not solve all the problems however I believe it would help to establish a base line of reasonable funding districts could count on. Having forward funding at a base level is also important for districts to plan their budgets.

7. What, in your opinion, is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?

Forward funding is a key area for sustainability of staff and programs. There should also be some type of a reserve account set aside for funding public schools.

8. What are some ideas, if any, that you think could improve public education in Alaska in general?

Quality teacher evaluation systems and support for mentoring and peer review projects could improve education in Alaska. Positive programs and policies which support educators and

students along with a rich and varied curriculum to meet the needs of a variety of students and the needs of our state would also be helpful.

9. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for their time and work. If appointed, how much time would you be able to devote?

If appointed I would need to arrange professional leave through my district for meetings which might occur during work time. I would commit to the time needed to be an effective member of the committee.

10. Please provide any other information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of this Task Force.

I am passionate about public education in Alaska and feel strongly that educators must be a part of the process which affects their profession. I have done a great deal of research and have access to national sources regarding effective programs which have been implemented around the nation. As leader of our local association, I was and continue to be actively involved in our local teacher evaluation process. I was appointed by Commissioner Hanley to serve on the state advisory committee assigned to look at recommendations regarding the new state regulations on teacher evaluation and student learning data.

Judy Eledge

Educator

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1. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to apply for the Sustainable Education Task Force. The State of Alaska has been my home for many years and though we are blessed as a very rich State, concerns over spending in our state and the sustainability of that spending is one of great concern. None concerns me more the amount spent on education. The public wants money to be spent fairly, efficiently and with accountability.

2. What strengths and/or skills would you bring to the task force?

As a retired educator, and now small business owner, the strengths and skills I bring to this committee are the many years I have lived and worked in both urban and rural Alaska. As a teacher, principal, district administrator and now private contractor I fully understand the unique problems and differences between a large school in Anchorage and small K-2 village school on the Yukon River.

3. Have you been a member of another task force before? If the answer is yes, please provide additional information.

I have never been on a task force per se, but did chair the School Choice Committee in the early 90s, which led to the current school choice legislation. I also served on the State Board of Education under Governor Hickel.

4. What's your view about the public education system in Alaska?

The public school system in Alaska is as diverse as the students that attend it. The system itself is much the same as it was 30 years ago, but the culture of the community has changed greatly. For years we have funded public education with millions of dollars with very little accountability of how the money was spent. Even though I have met some of the best educators anywhere working in Alaska, I am going to focus on things I think could be done better. Many of our schools are excellent but many are not. If we do not begin to have honest discussions with sacred cows left out of the room change will never happen. And change must happen not only for our students but also for all stakeholders.

In our rural communities local school boards struggle finding and retaining qualified administrators and teachers. Often times you see the same administrators being fired by one district, for lack of success, and immediately hired by another district to repeat the same efforts. In this environment the opportunity for change that requires long term planning and commitment begins but is often never completed.

In larger districts like the Anchorage School District the schools and district itself are so large and cumbersome there are few opportunities for "stepping out" of the box. In such a large organization often times the administrators become managers and not instructional leaders. Unions are so strong in the larger districts that administrators often "go along to get along" not

wanting to face the challenge of having a grievance filed. The size, scope and duties of a large city school often force you into mediocrity, just to survive.

In rural communities the K-12 School Model with one teacher lacks the diversity in educational experience to teach grades Kindergarten through twelfth grade. This creates a situation where local paraprofessionals, not teachers, teach many of the basic content. Often times these schools do not have a principal but have a Lead Teacher who must teach classes and then do all administrative duties of a principal additionally. Many have never had any administrative training and I am not aware of any such training in the state of Alaska.

Many of the problems facing small rural schools today must be placed at the feet of the local school board. Attendance rate of students and personnel is also a major factor. Students in some districts are allowed to miss 20-30 days a year and still be passed to the next grade with no consequences for either student or parent. Good administrators that buck the system and try to make difficult decisions often find their contract not renewed for the following year. Even though there are many great teachers in Alaska, most of them being trained in Alaska are not prepared for the regular classroom let alone a multi-aged classroom. I see an overburdened Education Department trying to balance state and federal law while trying to balance "local control. I see teachers living unhealthy live styles because of inadequate village housing and conditions in some of the villages.

5. In your view, are Alaskan public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

I believe AK Schools are adequately funded but not done in an efficient manner. It is not the base allocation amount that is the problem it is the way we look at cost differential. With the rising cost of just housing and basic needs of the past few years, the cost differential has not kept up. Along with the rising cost, I do not see a close monitoring of how money is spent in a district. There are no incentives for being creative or trying to contain the cost. Ongoing and consistent maintenance is a huge issue. Most districts do little preventive maintenance. We have created a system in Alaska that focuses on building 20 million dollar schools when a school is falling down from lack of proper maintenance instead of focusing on preventive and consistent maintenance.

6. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?

No, I do not believe increasing funding for Base Student Allocation will solve all financial problems for public schools in Alaska. History has demonstrated that raising the BSA has not increased student learning. As stated earlier emphasis should not be on the amount of money spent but how it is expended.

7. What, in your opinion, is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?

I am not sure I am qualified to state the best way to fund education in Alaska but I do think there needs to be a honest discussion. If you asked an educator how much money would be enough they would probably not be able to answer. If you asked the public they would just state they weren't getting what we are paying for in education. So following are topics for discussion I recommend:

- Support the base allocation but consider giving districts a 2-3 year funding amount. It is difficult to hold districts accountable for long term planning when they do not know from year to year the amount they are getting.
- Look at each cost for fuel and other basic needs every year and adjust the cost differential yearly based on actual costs.
- Travel is extensive and expensive. What is the total travel cost in a district? Could not local communities help pay for sports/activity travel? Could not educators going to conferences pay part of their conference costs?
- Hold districts and local school boards accountable for teacher raises that cannot be met with their current funding. Many boards give contracts with 3-5% raises over a three-year period with no idea how it will be paid for in the district.
- Look into one insurance pool for all teachers in the state. They pay into the retirement system and will eventually get retirement from the state and Medicare at 65. Why could the state not save millions of dollars bringing all the teachers into one system? There would be a bigger pool to negotiate prices with insurance companies and individual schools would not have to worry as much about rising costs.
- To do all of this there should be an audit of schools and exactly what percentage is spent on each area and recommendations to cut costs. There could even be an incentive program for districts that come up with cost saving plans.
- Monitor count days of small schools. Everyone knows many districts have 10 kids for the count period and for remainder of year have far fewer than 10.
- Centralize some of the small school districts in the area of curriculum, federal programs, etc. I have seen rooms filled with thousands of dollars of adopted curriculum still in unopened boxes. There is very little long term planning in curriculum and this costs districts thousands of dollars every year. Several states have “selected curriculum” from which a district can choose to use instead of searching out the hundreds that are available. Several years ago I was part of a group of curriculum directors who tried to set up a system to do the above, but died because of lack of funding.

8. What are some ideas, if any, that you think could improve public education in Alaska in general?

Listed below are my ideas in the area of school improvement in Alaska. It is only a beginning of my ideas but because of constraints and time the ones listed are major. When thinking of school improvement I look at 6 domains. They are leadership, school environment, assessment, instruction, professional development and curriculum. My list focuses on the leadership at state, colleges, district and legislative levels either by themselves or in collaboration. These are the leaders that will affect change in Alaska schools.

Leadership

- Any district with a K-12 School must have a certified teacher in elementary and one in secondary.
- UAA System needs to have professors that understand what is needed in schools today. Instruction is the key and not all teachers teach in a single one-grade classroom. There seems to be a lack of discussion between educators and the college system on exactly what is needed in a beginning teacher.

- Training in administrative duties for all lead teachers with no administrative credential.
- Laws to make Alaska a Right to Work State.
- Enforce state truancy laws.
- Where possible, parents have a choice in education. The dollar follows the student, not just a percentage. There are several School Choice bills in the legislature and think they should be allowed to go forward to put competition back into education.
- Regional high schools.
- True and updated vocational programs. 75% of students do not go to college. How are we in schools helping them be productive citizens?
- Contract out all technical services to a company that would be responsible for hiring, training and paying a technical consultant for each district. The sophistication of the technology of a district very much depends on who is hired. Many have never been in rural Alaska and lack the understanding of problems.
- Help districts with the huge cost of professional development and development of curriculum.
- Unless a student is unable cognitively to learn, stop social promotion.
- Decision to retain students should be made by professionals with parent input with ultimate decision made by the professionals.

9. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for their time and work. If appointed, how much time would you be able to devote?

If appointed I would be able to devote as much time as needed. I do have a commitment of one week a month but am sure it could be arranged to suit the needs of this committee.

10. Please provide any other information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of this Task Force.

Thank you for the efforts in forming this committee. The questions were thought provoking and very worthwhile. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Laura Farley

Educator

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907-355-3009

1. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

I believe our children are the future and we need to devote time, energy and money to their success. Educators need to be directly involved in the development of rules and regulations involved in educating those children. Any decisions that need to be made concerning the overall financial picture with students need input from educators.

2. What strengths and/or skills would you bring to the task force?

I enjoy working as a team member and can be a leader or follower as needed. I am involved in my local school and am able to share information and gather ideas from other educators or community members.

3. Have you been a member of another task force before? If the answer is yes, please provide additional information.

I was a member of a task force at the state level in the development and updates of the Standardized testing procedures/questions, in 2010.

4. What's your view about the public education system in Alaska?

Public Education in Alaska has been successful, but like any of us can use tweeking from time to time. I'm not afraid to look on the horizon and see what needs to be done so we can reach ALL students.

5. In your view, are Alaskan public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

Public Schools in Alaska are NOT adequately funded. With each new law/regulation/policy that comes along (good and bad) they forget the financial burden that comes along with the rules. Working in Special Education I see so many things that I have to fund out of my pocket to achieve student successes.

6. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?

Increasing BSA is only a start to solving the financial problems with public schools in Alaska. It's only one piece of the pie in helping our students succeed.

7. What, in your opinion, is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?

At the local and state levels need to work closer to meet the needs of ALL students, without the threat of retaliation when we ask for what we need.

8. What are some ideas, if any, that you think could improve public education in Alaska in general?

Forward funding for the school districts would help them so they don't have to throw money away at the end of each year and help them save money over time. School Districts working

with their staff directly concerning problems in their schools. Communication is always a key to increased trust and decreased squabbling amongst everyone involved.

9. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for their time and work. If appointed, how much time would you be able to devote?

As much as needed to get the job done.

10. Please provide any other information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of this Task Force.

I am a Special Education Teacher and have life experiences beyond the classroom to bring to the table with my thoughts, ideas and suggestions. I like to look beyond the tree and see the entire picture for everything and everyone involved.

Brent Fisher

Businessperson

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1. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

I am very interested to serve the students, families, and businesses of Alaska. My wife and I have been very pleased with the educational experience and programs in which our son has participated at Kincaid Elementary and Mears Middle Schools. I believe in the public school system. But I am very concerned with how education is funded in Alaska. I am also concerned as a businessman with educational outcomes and employability for the cost of education. I want to be a part of supporting and strengthening education in Alaska for the long-term.

2. What strengths and/or skills would you bring to the task force?

I have had a personal interest in education for decades. I have 5 children, the youngest of which is still in ASD at Mears Middle school. My wife is an educator with a degree in early childhood education. I have an appointment as an Assistant Clinical Professor at Loma Linda University. Of my four daughters, all have college degrees. One daughter is a middle school teacher. My in-laws are both teachers.

Growing up in a military family, I have experienced education in multiple locations. I have experienced what military dependent children experience: anxieties of coming to a new school, of making new friends, and losing them upon moving; stresses of knowing one will leave the school in 1, 2, 3, years or less; the importance of school as a friendly, welcoming, encouraging place. I have experienced my children being educated in public schools in Alaska, Texas, Florida, and California.

I have lived overseas 8 years in Germany, Japan, and Brazil. I have been immersed in several cultures and speak fluent Portuguese. I have some empathy for the expatriate family and children who are new to this country and this great land.

I have experience with online education. I served on the Board of Advisors for eKnowledge Group, an online college test preparation and eLearning organization. I also led the development effort for online interactive education software at EMPATH Consulting.

I have served on numerous boards. I know how they work and how to be effective in getting things done. I have executive experience in non-profit, for-profit, and government organizations. I have been successful in balancing budget, mission, and outcomes.

I know I can make an important contribution to addressing the challenge of high quality outcomes for our children while living within a reasonable and sustainable budget.

3. Have you been a member of another task force before? If the answer is yes, please provide additional information.

Not an Alaska State Task Force. I served on a federal task force for determining accreditation for emergency departments for the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

4. What's your view about the public education system in Alaska?

Both my wife and I were educated in public school systems. We both have good memories of the education system of our time. Our experience with public education for our children has been equally positive. However, we have always been selective in where we have lived; because we have found that in the communities where parents are involved, the education is better.

My wife and I have been very pleased with the public education experience and programs in which our son has participated in Alaska. I want all children in Alaska to have that same outcome. I want to be a part of supporting and strengthening the education experience within Alaska.

5. In your view, are Alaskan public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

Based on my current information, I believe it is adequately funded. Often increased funding and improved public education efforts end up creating a school system of buildings and administrators not an educational methodology that improves the experience for children and improved outcomes. It is not the school systems that must be strong: It is the educational resources that must be effective. It is the educators that must be self-accountable. It is the tools that must be deployed in a manner such that the students are enabled in their pursuit of learning and not delayed and road blocked in their quest for knowledge.

6. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?

The answer to that question is more complex than it appears. As I understand it, there are currently several sources of funding for public schools in Alaska. So all of those funding sources need to be considered and possibly modified if BSA is increased. Research is clear that education funding in and of itself is not the solution to improving outcomes for children.

7. What, in your opinion, is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?

I would not suggest a "best way" to fund public schools at this time without further research on my part. Alaska is a unique state with unique needs regarding education. It has concentration of some children and many remote locations with difficult access.

Alaska has stepped in one direction that I think needs further evolution. In one sense, Alaska has a state-wide education voucher under the public school district funded home schooling program which includes the use of private tutors and online curriculum supported by public school districts. Public school districts must be innovative in designing a delivery of education that will enhance the educational experience for a variety of needs and circumstances while ensuring a high quality educational outcome.

Alaska must not be a copy-cat state regarding an educational voucher or other funding mechanism; but, we must be exploring and creating an educational system that meets Alaska's needs for a more highly trained citizenry that will attract business and be prepared for major

industrial growth in the natural resource industries as well as the tech industries. Depending upon the design of the education funding mechanism, it could well introduce competition that would result in more innovative approaches to cost effective education while achieving improvements in performance like that achieved by other school districts in Canada and the lower 48.

ASD commands a critical mass of specialty resources that can play a major role in the new design because it can serve as shared infrastructure whether the student attends a public school, home school, private school as well as whether they live in a city or remote location.

8. What are some ideas, if any, that you think could improve public education in Alaska in general?

My perception, based on my and my child's experience, is that, in general, Alaska provides a high quality education with multiple choices for extracurricular activities and alternative schooling methodologies. But I also perceive that there is disparity in the quality of education based on individual schools and locations even excluding the natural differences found in the alternative school options. Costs also seem disproportionate to demographics.

I believe there are a number of opportunities to improve the organization and outcomes for children attending Alaska schools: (a) I perceive a need for the school board and administration to strengthen relations and communication. (b) There is a need to reevaluate the strategic plans. (c) Student performance has not improved in Alaska despite significant increases in resources and funding indicating a need for Alaska to develop new key performance indicators (KPIs). (d) With reforms already started in some locations, there is a need for more strategic and cross-functional coordination and communications of reform implementation. (e) Systems of accountability need to be strengthened for both administration and especially teachers. Teachers need to be evaluated and decisions based on "value added" performance not seniority. (f) Regular implementation and evaluation of instructional initiatives and professional development efforts goes in tandem with accountability. (g) Vigilance in streamlining operations systems is a constant or bureaucratic inertia takes over, service declines, and costs increase. (h) Evaluation of real property assets should be completed and realistic utilization or repurposing put into effect.

Often increased funding and improved public education efforts end up creating a school system of buildings and administrators not an educational methodology that improves the experience for children and improved outcomes. It is not the school systems that must be strong: It is the educational resources that must be effective. It is the educators that must be self-accountable. It is the tools that must be deployed in a manner such that the students are enabled in their pursuit of learning and not delayed and road blocked in their quest for knowledge.

9. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for their time and work. If appointed, how much time would you be able to devote?

I am willing to put in the time necessary to get something done. I am not interested in a figure head position. If I am selected as a task force member my intent is to contribute the time and talents necessary to make a difference during the time for which I serve.

10. Please provide any other information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of this Task Force.

I am not seeking a task force seat with the idea of creating a legacy for myself. But if someone were to read board minutes, I would want them to see that I was a catalyst for realistic, reasoned, innovative improvements in funding children's education that focused on the basics of high quality outcomes at a reasonable cost to the tax payer.

Courtney M. Forbes

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1. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

My own personal passion is education and I know that without leaders who are willing and able to guide our education system into new opportunities we will become stagnant. I want to be part of the innovation that bring the rest of the state into a higher echelon of educational best practices.

2. What strengths and/or skills would you bring to the task force?

I have been immersed in education for all of my life. My grandmother was a teacher and then a principal in rural Minnesota, my mother was a teacher and then an administrator within Anchorage School District, and I have been a teacher in a general education classroom as well as a special education classroom. I have two master's degrees, one in literacy and the other in administration and I will complete my third master's in special education this year. I have taught in a variety of settings such as Title 1 schools, a Department of Defense school, an Optional Program and a middle-class neighborhood school.

3. Have you been a member of another task force before? If the answer is yes, please provide additional information.

I have not been on a task force previously.

4. What's your view about the public education system in Alaska?

My view is that our system is stretched to meet the incredibly diverse needs of very large and spread out districts. Though we all want the very best for students and their welfare should always be at the forefront of every decision, we as a state are often not able to meet the basic needs of our public education system. In my experiences at conferences, academies and in trainings, I am often humbled by the tenacity and dedication of fellow educators. I have found myself frustrated with the disconnection between government policies, public perceptions and those of us who are "on the ground" within the school systems.

5. In your view, are Alaskan public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

In an attempt to be concise, no, I do not feel that schools are adequately funded. Apart from the disparity that exists between an affluent school and a Title 1 school, there is a whole bracket of schools that fall into the gray area of being low income but not low enough (to receive supplementary funds) and administrators who do not know how to seek additional funding. I also am concerned about the professional development of our educators. In my 520+ hours of additional trainings that I have completed since joining ASD 5 years ago, a large majority of the trainings have failed to address current research or include areas of national focus such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Educators seeking exposure to current or up-and-coming research have to travel outside at their own expense. Often, the information that they gleam is not disseminated out to the rest of the district, either through lack of opportunity or training to do so. More funding for schools could mean that the information

that is presented by the researchers could be brought to us here in Alaska in large venues rather than in isolated pockets.

6. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?

No. I believe it is a multi-faceted problem that must be addressed from multiple angles.

7. What, in your opinion, is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?

One of the practices in ASD is that our budget is always projected. We wait on tenterhooks to see what programs, positions, and supplies will be funded, often not knowing until the last minute. This constant state of uncertainty devalues the accomplishments and hard work of those who are on the potential “chopping block” and negatively skews the public perception of the district. A set amount of funding guaranteed by the state would ease this unfortunate situation. There has been a lot of discussion about vouchers and many people have very strong opinions on the topic. While participating in the Mayor’s summit on education two years ago I noticed that the undercurrent agenda was in favor of such practices. I am not sure that vouchers are the way to go.

8. What are some ideas, if any, that you think could improve public education in Alaska in general?

As I mentioned earlier, I believe that professional development for educators needs to be more rigorous and relevant. I also believe that the information pipeline between government, schools, and the public must be utilized in a more efficient manner. Relationships between schools and the community (either through business partnerships or apprenticeship opportunities) need to be fostered and developed so that students are exposed to authentic learning opportunities and the community gains additional insights into current educational practice.

9. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for their time and work. If appointed, how much time would you be able to devote?

I would be able to devote as much time as I was needed to make a positive difference.

10. Please provide any other information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of this Task Force.

I am an educator of the future and your target audience. I am involved in the pre-service education of aspiring teachers at both UAA and APU and I am a mentor teacher for the ASD as well as being the teacher in charge at my school and being dually certified in both special and general education. I actively seek additional learning so that I remain relevant and I network within the district with ease. I am articulate and poised but I am also candid and have a passion to see the state of education improve.

Emily Forstner

Educator

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1. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

I appreciate the open invitation and opportunity to apply for the Sustainable Education Task Force. I am a full time teacher at Wasilla Middle School. I am a veteran educator with 32 years of classroom service, having taught on the Jicarilla Apache Reservation and in the Mat-Su School District in both the elementary and middle school systems. I am highly qualified to teach middle school and secondary Language Arts and middle school Social Studies. I also hold a Master in Education Leadership and a Type B certificate. Inside and out of the classroom I am known as an articulate communicator with a deep-rooted commitment to public education and literacy.

2. What strengths and/or skills would you bring to the task force?

I bring to the task force a tabula rasa, a blank slate. Clearly the funding formula for Alaska schools is a matter of contention and debate; and has been since I first began teaching here in 1983. If my experience teaching has not enlightened me with the answers to the funding dilemma, it certainly has afforded me the wisdom to know that Alaska's public education funding cannot be a one-size fits all formula.

3. Have you been a member of another task force before? If the answer is yes, please provide additional information.

I have never been a member of a task force before and am excited at the possibility of that level of public service.

4. What's your view about the public education system in Alaska?

Being entrenched in the public school system as educator and parent allows me an intimate view of the system at large. Alaska's public education system is in many respects on the cutting edge of greatness. Our families, while uniquely independent, value education and their children's schools. Our knowledgeable and skilled teachers accomplish much in a most diverse and rich environment. Positives aside, Alaska is also a two-tiered system of rural versus urban. Our intense and massive landscape creates a disparity between school communities. Because of this, Alaska's funding issues are complex and layered, not only with the social ills associated with rural poverty, but with multi-cultural concerns, variable access to resources, and a myriad of unintended consequences from good intentions gone bad.

5. In your view, are Alaskan public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

I do not believe Alaska's schools are adequately funded considering the size of the state coffers. That said, I also recognize the state's lack of economic diversity and tenuous nature that comes from depending on natural resources as the primary source of revenue. I am also aware of what I consider a natural fact of public service: schools can never be adequately funded. The public will always demand more than taxation can provide.

6. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?

So, do I believe increasing the Base Student Allocation will solve all the financial problems for public schools in Alaska? No, I don't. Do I believe the Base Student Allocation should be raised? Yes, I do. Our school districts currently have no other means in which to provide the plethora of services their communities' insist of their schools. Our districts need to be more independent in their ability to raise funds for their individual schools.

7. What, in your opinion, is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?

The success of public education is not dependent on money. It is dependent on quality teachers, guaranteed and viable rigorous curriculum, and safe environments- in that order. Public education can improve when the state invests its resources with these criteria in mind. Public education is a right and a privilege that should first fall on the local community and then the state government. The funding for education should follow that order as well. Considering the vast range of Alaska's cultures and economies, educational equity is hard to achieve becoming a Dr. Doolittle's Push-Me-Pull-Me more than a horse being led to water. Thus, I am reminded of Will Durant's observations in Lessons of History: equality and freedom- while both desirable- are not compatible states of being. The funding formula has to wrestle with this notion, as well as the criteria for educational success.

8. What are some ideas, if any, that you think could improve public education in Alaska in general?

Americans have always placed a premium on a public education for all. In testimony to this, a section of each township was dedicated to schools. Without the tradition of public schools the reality of the American melting pot would not exist. Alaska's changing demography, the amazing and instant access to a wealth of information, and the globalization of economies and ideals insist that the state do all it can to promote a quality education for the common good of all. I am fervent believer in public education. I have invested my life to the premise that all men are created equal and that their freedom depends on the critical reader and thinker. Admittedly, I don't have the answer as to how to adjust the BAT. However, I do know that Einstein was correct when he said "We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them."

9. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for their time and work. If appointed, how much time would you be able to devote?

During the school year I am available up to 5 days of personal leave, weekends and evenings.

10. Please provide any other information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of this Task Force.

Alaska has been my home for 30 years. My husband of 25 years is a North Pacific fish observer for Saltwater Inc. We have two daughters who both graduated from Colony High School in Palmer and now attend UAA in Anchorage.

I would be honored to serve on the task force and offer my years of experience in the classroom, my ability to compress complex ideas into simple language, and my willingness to listen and learn.

Marc Grober

Businessperson

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I am very interested in serving on the Task Force on Sustainable Education and believe that my experience and skills may be an appropriate match for your requirements. I am a private business person, an attorney, and an educator. I have worked as an information technology professional for a federal agency, a state agency and for my local district, have raised two children in Alaska and have had them educated in Alaskan public schools (with a brief stint at home schooling.) Both graduated college (one with a BA in theater, the other with a BFA in sculpture) and both are well employed in the top national income quartile outside Alaska. I believe in life long learning and that education undergirds our democracy. I am 61, white, male, married and cohabiting with same person (a lifelong educator and union member) for as long as I have been a registered Republican (30 years.) I have been a resident of Alaska since 1975 and have lived in both urban Alaska, and in a river village, where I ran a fish wheel, served on a regional subsistence council, attempted to establish a borough sabotaged by the LBC, incorporated and supported a health clinic (I also served as a Board member of the Anchorage Neighborhood Health Center), taught business law for a rural college outreach program and mentored students for the local school principal. A member of the Alaska Bar since 1977, I am also admitted to various other Bars including those of the District of Alaska and the 9th Circuit. I hold a Professional Teaching Certificate from the State of Alaska and have taught in elementary, secondary and post- secondary programs (including UAA, UAF and Charter College.)

All too often I have seen education in this State (and Nationally) driven by fad and ideology, from pillar to post and back, with funding a feast or famine with attendant polarization that invariably detracts from the research and analysis necessary to address underlying questions about the nature of education. A task force will hopefully allow the House to focus on data-driven consideration of the problems facing us and potential solutions to our educational demands and aspirations, but that is likely only if the task force is peopled with persons who understand educational budgeting in Alaska, have an in-depth appreciation of the educational commitments the State has made, appreciate the various perspectives on education present in Alaska and understand how those perspective fit within the legal framework in place. Of course, members should know how to make use of staff and how to work with others who may have different perspectives.

I served as a member of the Budget Review Team system for the largest school district in the State for the duration of that systems implementation (some dozen years.) The BRT served as a task force charged with budget recommendations to address the District's shrinking revenues and rising costs. While I promoted cuts that eventually saved the District hundreds of thousands of dollars, the importance of the process was in obtaining and promoting solutions that could move forward through the budget process and eventually be endorsed by the Board. It is one thing to propose an idea, another altogether to move that idea through a political process to fruition.

I am a long time critic of the quality of public education in Alaska. As an attorney who has practiced in the area of Education Law for many years I have drafted legislation (introduced as a

Bill before the legislature) to cure some ills and have testified extensively both as to legislation (before House and Senate committees) and regulations (as well having been qualified as an expert in some areas of education law by the Courts.) I was a charter member of the Education Law Section of the Alaska Bar, and have run CLEs for that section widely attended by Alaska educators and have also conducted in-service for teachers on aspects of education law. I have even run for school board. I have tried to “make a difference” and even went so far as obtaining my teaching certificate so as to take my place in the classroom (at the request of a principal), and now tutor students who are not getting what they need from their schools (public and private.) Frankly, I don't see private education in Alaska as doing any better for students than public education. And, while home schooling can be an effective solution for some, it is more often than not inconsistent with the expectations we have of public schooling.

As is so often the case, there is no simple solution for funding public education because in no small part there is no simple definition of what public education should be. How much we spend and whether what we spend is adequate is dependent on what we expect in return and how that return is to be measured. By way of example, some see education purely as a form of sophisticated vocational training, and some see it as a basis for civic engagement; an attempt by both such camps to limit education and its funding to their view alone will result in friction and argument about education funding, though neither camp will really be speaking of the same thing. For years I have been concerned that the gaps in our view of education are much greater than our consensus, especially when as a public school teacher one is told by parents that their children don't need Algebra, History, or Economics.

My experience has been that our educational institutions are struggling under a set of inconsistent demands that management expenditures have risen dramatically, while waste, duplication and financial abuse abound, that overall we are underfunding our obligation to our children and our future. This conclusion is the result of years of analysis, not some ideological baseline. I think anyone who has worked through a District budget and had to address the various demands on that budget imposed by the State, together with the realities of appropriate pedagogy and the demands of physical plant and labor, must acknowledge that while some savings can be realized, our districts cannot meet all the demands placed upon them with the revenues they now have at their disposal.

I am pleased that HR-8 identifies with granularity some of the financial issues confronting us. By way of example, if I were on the Task Force I would ensure that the Task Force were fully apprised of the effectiveness of Health Trusts in addressing spiraling health costs. At the same time, I would focus on the impacts to education that the loss of Alaska's direct benefit pension may have produced. Investigation of both of these matters may produce politically unappetizing results for some in as much as they have been the subject of partisan politics, but one hopes that the purpose of the Task Force is to bring the politics to heel, in a manner of speaking, so that the politics are well-informed, not to generate propaganda.

Real solutions to the budget crises our districts face will come from narrowing educational objectives, incrementing state or local revenue, or cutting back on plant, management or labor expenses. If someone is looking for proof of just how difficult things get from that point, just start promoting the elimination of the local football team. And yes, I have served as a paid

assistant high school football coach and I have argued for cutting competitive sports from my District's budget. Hard choices in hard times call for tough decisions; Algernon Sidney's failure is more important than the Wing-T's success.

But, as the discussion above suggests, simply asking the State to push more money into the pipe is not a comprehensive answer, however necessary additional funding may be. Public schools must be funded by the State, and the funding must be legal and must be seen as “fair” by all “stakeholders”. Building schools by itself is no more a solution than computer based instruction is by itself. Remote instruction is no silver bullet either. We need to be able to provide students with hands-on access to the best teachers in environments where the teachers truly have access to the students. Amazingly enough that is not something we have really been focused upon.

We have an incredible number of ineffective administrators, and the PTPC has refused to pursue matters in which administrators have been referred for violations of Alaska education regulations and statutes. It is simply ridiculous to expect much from our educational institutions when we have a paucity of effective educational leadership. Likewise, expecting such administrators to be able to effectively manage teachers is almost preposterous. While accountability has been on so many lips, the efforts by the State in this direction (the present regime included) have failed in large part because regimes have not been thoroughly explored before deployment. Public education in Alaska is desperately in need of peer review and interaction; absent educational leadership we must look to our cadre of competent senior educators to move us forward. However, many in positions of political leadership refer to this group as elitist thugs while our educational leaders push these people out of education in order to save money hiring teachers so poorly prepared that training budgets have skyrocketed. If we want to see why education is in trouble we need only look in the mirror.

For the State to realize anything substantive from the Task Force, the Task Force must draw from beyond the “usual suspects” for its membership, and it must rise above the partisanship that has become the hallmark of Alaskan politics. As a long time Alaska investor in the success of our State, I am hoping for the best.

I am willing to commit 20-30 hours/week to the Task Force. I don't expect that the Task Force will be able to accomplish its charge absent that kind of commitment.

Andrew Halcro

Businessperson

Email: president@anchoragechamber.org

1. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

As the president of the largest business trade association in Alaska, education continues to be a major concern of the business community. The public school population in Alaska represents close to all of our emerging workforce, and the business community has a role to play in helping public policy makers determine the skills needed to be considered graduation ready. In serving on the education task force, I will bring a comprehensive view from the private sector, the end user of Alaska's public school graduates.

2. What strengths and/or skills would you bring to the task force?

As a former Anchorage School District graduate, Gladys Wood Elementary School PTA president, statewide business owner, state legislator, and the creator of the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce's current education initiatives, my combined insight at the intersection of public education and the economy will bring significant value to the task force.

3. Have you been a member of another task force before? If the answer is yes, please provide additional information.

No.

4. What's your view about the public education system in Alaska?

I believe the public education system in Alaska is good but needs to be better. There are challenges inherent to educating young Alaskans including geographical and cultural barriers. The vast expanse of the state levies tremendous socio-economic costs in rural school districts due to distance and isolation. This creates problems when trying to address adequate and balanced statewide funding. In urban districts, rapidly changing demographics have added to the complexity of delivering education including a growing population where English is not their first language. However, over ninety percent of Alaskan students attend public schools which means we need work harder to understand the changes and adopt policies that reflect the dynamic environment.

5. In your view, are Alaskan public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

I believe there are legitimate arguments on both sides of the funding question.

Can any organization be expected to keep pace with rising costs and a changing environment when it is flat funded for four years in a row? No. Should any organization who invests as much as we do on education be happy with the return on our investment? No.

The equation for breaking this circular argument is a collective approach. School districts must be willing to embrace non-profit agencies like the Anchorage Chamber and the United Way who are leveraging private sector resources to help boost education. In return, successful collaboration will bare education results that will become an argument for additional investments.

6. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?

Money will never solve all of the challenges that education faces. What will solve challenges is how well we manage the money we do spend while leveraging non-profit/private sector partnerships to help support teachers, address critical socio-economic issues and contribute to defining graduation readiness.

7. What, in your opinion, is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?

I believe the Base Student Allocation is a misleading number. The average of what the state invests every year in the BSA is an average that doesn't accurately reflect the true cost per student based on actual consumption of education resources and allows for gross misrepresentation. With 16% of the Anchorage School District students requiring additional resources due to special needs, this large and growing percentage of students costs significantly more per student than say my daughter cost while attending West Anchorage High School. The challenge is, and always has been, how do you establish a formula that fairly reflects the cost differentials for geography and a changing student population? In order to craft an equitable formula, the committee needs to be looking at socio-economic data beyond the normal education dashboards that have historically been used.

8. What are some ideas, if any, that you think could improve public education in Alaska in general?

I believe the best idea going forward is to create stronger collaboration between traditional education groups, the business community and government agencies to create alignment in addressing the growing socio-economic problems that are negatively impacting education in Alaska.

9. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for their time and work. If appointed, how much time would you be able to devote?

As much time as the committee demands. This year education will be one of the primary areas of focus for the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce, so work on the task force would align with our existing 2013/14 strategic plan.

10. Please provide any other information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of this Task Force.

My experience as a former state lawmaker who dealt with education funding issues when oil was \$10 per barrel, my years as an Anchorage Daily News columnist writing about how the economy and education intersect and my current position of leading the largest Chamber of Commerce in Alaska all point to a knowledge of education that is substantive and relevant to the work of the task force. I believe my qualifications will add value as one of the two business seats on the task force.

Barbara Haney

Businessperson

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907 347 5109

1. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

I care deeply and passionately about education policy in the state. I have been working, through my own resources, on issues related to education policy in this state and others on the issue of the Common Core. I would be able to bring a wealth of knowledge to the task force on this issue.

2. What strengths and/or skills would you bring to the task force?

I have the ability to bring a variety of experiences to the task force. I have been a university education and am the former head of the Center for Economic Education at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. In that capacity, I facilitated the teaching of economics in schools across Alaska and was part of an instructional team that did in-service training. I have been a homeschool educator, and was a charter member and activist that helped the first publicly funded correspondence program. I have also homeschooled as an independent homeschooler. I have been the parent of a graduate of a charter school (Star of the North) and Lathrop High School. I have worked as an adult ABE educator, and was one of the principal instructors in the R.E.A.L. program for Rural Alaskans (village). Prior to living in Alaska, I was a member of the American Federation of Teachers and served as the assistant to the President of the 19th District COPE of the AFL-CIO. I have also taught at major universities like Washington State University and smaller colleges such as St. Mary's in South Bend, IN. This is a vast background to bring to the committee that spans private schools, public schools, homeschooling, and union involvement.

I received my Ph.D. from the University of Notre Dame, and my BA from Eastern Illinois University. I attended public high school, and a small community college (now known as Southwestern Illinois College) prior to attending Eastern. I have credentials that educators will respect.

As a parent, I have some unique distinctions. One of my daughters was the youngest to receive her high school diploma from the state of Alaska; another one of my children was 7th in the World Swim Championships. One of my children was 80% visually impaired and 80% auditory impaired; another was diagnosed with dyslexia. I am not unaware of the challenges of special needs children.

3. Have you been a member of another task force before? If the answer is yes, please provide additional information.

I served on the standards committee back in the early 1990s in Alaska through the Social Studies Council during the Hickel Administration, and the faculty committee that designed the core curriculum at University of Alaska Fairbanks. Prior to that time, I served on a task force on Public Pensions in the State of Illinois which led to solvency in the pension system.

4. What's your view about the public education system in Alaska?

Public education is an important component to preparing the next generation of Alaskans to serve and lead in a free society. Parents should have the right to choose the type of education

their children receive. Like Ted Stevens, I believe that sports and recreation is a vital component of life skills for Alaskan students and makes Alaskans more productive over a longer span of time.

5. In your view, are Alaskan public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

Part of the problem with answering this is twofold: 1) the administrative aspect of education has grown enormously in recent years. Before deciding if the BSA is adequate, a close evaluation of the structure of education programs is in order. It may be that existing funds are not utilized effectively. In addition 2) there are a lot of education dollars that are flowing through budget areas like economic development, such as in-service training on STEM, and energy assistance in other budget line items. To get an effective handle on the BSA, it may be useful to consolidate all expenditures and look at them. It may be the BSA, for all practical purposes, has already increased. Knowing the 'actual' BSA is a step to answering the question.

6. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?

I think getting a handle on expenditures should be the first priority. There seems to be an increase in administrative costs, along with non-instructional personnel over recent years that warrant an examination. I also believe that competition brings with it efficiencies that no administrative review could possibly provide. There is a potential in collecting fees in other areas, such as motor vehicle registration. In general, monopolies provide less at a higher cost; competition encourages greater production and lower cost, even in the public sector. Opening up the competitive process in education would be beneficial for Alaskans.

7. What, in your opinion, is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?

There are two answers: one is the short run and the other is the long run. Funding public schools on property taxes in the face of declining real estate values is probably should be re-evaluated. While historically, property values rise, the recent decline in Alaska's economy outside of Anchorage makes reliance on this base a less stable source of income. In the long run, the state needs find a mix of revenue sources, and consider a permanent fund that is dedicated to education finance. I would hate to see the state adopt a system of education funding that would contribute to the moral degradation of Alaskans, but might consider sin taxes that are connected to preserving the historic character of a region and still preserves pull tab revenues that have been vital to Alaska Youth Sports and contribute to the tourist industry.

Education is not the only service the state provides. Sometimes, educators forget this.

8. What are some ideas, if any, that you think could improve public education in Alaska in general?

I am a strong advocate of parental choice. I am very concerned about the state's decision to use SBAC to deliver the common core assessments, and I don't think it was a wise choice. At the present time, I think the best thing that the legislature could do is follow the role of the PA, UT, AL, and MI legislatures and introduce legislation (June 28, 2013) that would suspend SBAC's involvement in Alaska's education. It is my opinion that this is an immediate item for the legislature to consider, but certainly not the only item.

9. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for their time and work. If appointed, how much time would you be able to devote?

60% of my time.

10. Please provide any other information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of this Task Force.

I am an economist. My background in public policy is in the field of public finance, and my dissertation was on beer beverage taxes and their roll in state and federal finance. My other area of research has been in the area of taxable capacity and extending the work of Laffer in finding that level of taxation that is “politically tolerant.” I am also a citizen and I am part of any particular interest; I have been parent, teacher, educator, and grandmother in this state. I have lived in Alaska for over 20 years. I have served in a variety of capacities. Throughout this time, I have been active in education issues. My children are grown, and my grandchildren are close to grown. My family is very diverse and includes Asian, Hispanic, Athabascan, Inupiak, and African Americans, so I have a great appreciation for the diverse faces of Alaska’s future. From the standards during the Hickel years, to the creation of correspondence programs, to the battle over the education formula in 1997, to challenging No Child Left Behind testing, I have been an active voice. You will not find a more passionate advocate for parents, students, and teachers in the state.

Gloria Hanrahan

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1. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

I have personally witnessed the waste of public funds and lack of accountability within public schools in Anchorage. As a former teacher and a parent, I do not see where my efforts through other avenues have helped create a quality education for my students or my children.

2. What strengths and/or skills would you bring to the task force?

Having experience as a Special Education teacher with the Anchorage School District from 1991-2006, I understand the bureaucracy and subtleties of divisions of power in our public school organizations.

I have also taught in two other states, giving me a perspective of schools outside. I have served as President of Wendler PTSA and as a Regional VP with the Alaska PTA while volunteering in several neighborhood schools. Through these experiences, I was able to speak with numerous parents in a variety of schools, about their concerns for their children's education. I was also able to develop relationships with administrators who privately shared information on funding, curriculum, and their lack of power to fire incompetent teachers and create equality within Anchorage schools.

3. Have you been a member of another task force before?

No

4. What's your view about the public education system in Alaska?

I believe our schools have always lagged behind other states in providing our children relevant educational opportunities or keeping up with the changes presented by technology. Until the re-authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (NCLB) in 2001, the Anchorage School District did not track graduation rates, have curriculum standards or even attempt to provide equity in educational programming. Our schools continue to be discriminatory in providing educational programs to all students, regardless of where they live or the family income.

Perhaps other districts are doing a better job, but ASD violates NCLB by not involving parents in Compacts or presenting factual information in language parents can understand. ASD refuses to print or willingly give online links for school improvement plans to parents. Test scores reported are questionable considering the computer program used by ASD (Zangle) to track attendance, grades and test scores can be manipulated by any teacher or administrator in ASD and frequently contain wrong information. Until forced by parents and community members, ASD leadership did not voluntarily provide appropriate programming for our multi-ethnic communities. Our children are being treated punitively in regards to test scores and not allowed to take electives unless they obtain arbitrary scores, even though current pedagogy stresses the value of elective classes in increasing standardized test scores.

5. In your view, are Alaskan public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

Due to the lack of transparent accountability for how funds are spent at local levels, it is difficult for an average person, such as myself, to understand exactly where money is directed or if our schools have enough funds. I began teaching in 1980, and each and every school year there is an outcry of lack of funds. ASD has demonstrated the continuing attitude of "spend it or lose it" with a bloated administrative staff, travel expenses and legal fees. None of these funds spent result in a quality education for the children.

6. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?

No. HB 95 would increase funds to the Anchorage area, with an emphasis on the school district providing goals and plans. Every school has the same goal, which is to increase student achievement. This has always been the goal of public education, yet our educational leadership continues to reconstruct the same concepts, using different buzzwords, to appear as if action and remediation of problems is happening. The education bottom line is every child deserves an excellent teacher in the classroom, with honest administrators leading our schools. This has not happened and additional moneys will not make it happen.

7. What, in your opinion, is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?

I have not had time to formulate a specific solution which would quickly change funding. The parameters I believe are necessary must include some type of leverage for parents to be able to ensure their children receive an appropriate education.

8. What are some ideas, if any, that you think could improve public education in Alaska in general?

Alaska needs a clear, concise working definition of "education" which can be easily observed, measured and replicated. Every teacher should be required to produce a syllabus outlining how standards are being met, the methodology which is used in all classrooms and be held accountable for the outcome. Alaska spends a great deal of money paying teachers and administrators who are incompetent and often abusive. I believe it is time for some type of punitive action on the part of the State, when school districts do not remove incompetent employees or falsify documents which generate funds. Our schools would be stronger if each school had a parent organization, independent of school district control, such as a PTA. My daughter's high school has no organized parent voice for over 2,000 families, which effectively silences and isolates any parent with concerns.

9. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for their time and work. If appointed, how much time would you be able to devote?

I do not know how much time would be expected, but due to the age of my children and my husband's flexibility as a small business owner, I have a great deal of latitude and can assume I will be able to spend as much time as needed.

10. Please provide any other information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of this Task Force.

I come from a very poor family, in which my grandmothers were married by the ages of 13 and

15. They had little opportunity or education. Through public education, my husband and I have obtained graduate degrees and a lifestyle not afforded to those who came before us. I believe in the purpose of public education and what can be achieved through public education.

I am truly tired of our public funds paying for schools where teachers/administrators cross my value system and what I am trying to teach my children. This happens by having students involved in activities such as watching a movie with a bare breasted 15 year old actress and a totally nude 17 year old actor and and being told told it is needed to teach Shakespeare.

I am truly tired of public funds paying administrators who misuse their authority to violate the code of ethics and cover up the mistreatment of children. Carol Comeau sat across from my husband and myself during an audio tape-recorded meeting and stated, "Yes, I received your letter the children were being hit and I chose to ignore it." As a parent, I am powerless to protect my children, or hold administrators accountable with our current system.

I am truly tired of having experiences such as being told by an ASD teacher that I am not to question what she does in the classroom. Not only is it my right, it is my job as a parent to always question.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Cynthia Henry

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907-388-5379

1. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

I have a life-long interest in education. The State of Alaska is in a time of fiscal uncertainty, so good decisions regarding sustainable funding of public education are imperative.

2. What strengths and/or skills would you bring to the task force?

I have been involved with education most of my life. I have been a student, teacher, school board member, and, most recently, a member of the UA Board of Regents. I have spent countless hours tackling the challenges in education. I would bring considerable experience to the task force.

3. Have you been a member of another task force before? If the answer is yes, please provide additional information.

Please see my resume.

4. What's your view about the public education system in Alaska?

I have concerns about the delivery of education in Alaska. While there are some classrooms and programs which are exemplary, there are many students who are not successful in our schools. Alaska's high dropout rate is very troubling.

5. In your view, are Alaskan public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

Alaska schools are probably adequately funded. However, some schools and school districts do not always allocate funding for maximum benefit of student learning. While the legislature does not, and probably should not, have line item veto power over school district budgets, there are ways to require channeling funds for student success.

6. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?

No, I do not believe increasing funding to the BSA will solve the financial problems for education in Alaska. The legislature has maximized leverage by funding education quite generously outside the BSA.

My experience is that school districts have an insatiable appetite for funding. Every dollar appropriated will be spent. The challenge is in determining where "needs" stop and "wants" begin.

7. What, in your opinion, is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?

The answer to that question is complicated. I think that is why you are forming a task force. Much of what the legislature has been doing recently in terms of funding education is appropriate. You are wise to be seeking input from Alaskans with experience and expertise on the subject. There are good ideas and incentives that will emerge from the committee's deliberations and the data they request.

8. What are some ideas, if any, that you think could improve public education in Alaska in general?

Two areas come immediately to my mind. Technology needs to be utilized more and more effectively in classrooms. Secondly, teacher training needs improvement. Teachers need specific training in motivating and promoting student engagement in learning.

9. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for their time and work. If appointed, how much time would you be able to devote?

I am accustomed to public service without financial compensation. I find that lending my time and talent to improving the future of Alaska is a great reward in itself. I own and manage my own business, so I have considerable control over my schedule and could accommodate day-long meetings. I appreciate serving on boards where the members come well prepared having read and considered the written materials provided. They could expect no less from me.

10. Please provide any other information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of this Task Force.

I have been a resident of Alaska for nearly four decades. During that time, I have been a keen observer and participant in public education. A well educated population and workforce elevates the quality of life for all of us. There is probably no endeavor more important than improving education for our children and youth. I would welcome the opportunity to serve on the task force.

Todd Hindman

Educator

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1. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

I have lived and taught in rural Alaska for 16 years. I would like to serve on the task force to share my experiences that have shaped the ideas I have to make reforms in our public education system.

2. What strengths and/or skills would you bring to the task force?

I just finished up my 24th year as an educator and I still exhibit the enthusiasm I had for teaching when I started. I am currently the Principal / Teacher at Anvil City Science Academy, in Nome, Alaska. Over the past 14 years I have had the pleasure of helping to develop a unique and successful educational program. Anvil City Science Academy is a public charter school in its 15th year of operation that serves the needs of 5th through 8th grade students. I began my career at ACSA as the only certified teacher with 22 students and a full time teacher's aide. At the end of my second year, ACSA had enough new applicants to warrant the addition of another full time teacher. I then began to serve the school as Lead Teacher. Since that time, the staff and a group of supportive parents have been able to establish a thriving educational program that I am extremely proud of. For the past ten years, we have maintained full enrollment, at our capped enrollment of 45, and currently have a waiting list of 37 students. Within the past year, we have been able to increase our potential enrollment to 66 students, but will have to overcome some issues with the facility our school is located in. We have also met AYP each year and consistently ranked in the top 15% of schools in Alaska during the Alaska School Performance Program. I believe the experiences I have had at ACSA would benefit my work on the task force, as well as the task force as a whole

3. Have you been a member of another task force before? If the answer is yes, please provide additional information.

No, I have not previously been a member of a task force.

4. What's your view about the public education system in Alaska?

Public education provides a valuable service for our society, in that it can be a great "equalizer." On the whole, it is working, but it can be improved. As a 24 year educator, I take great pride in the work I and many others have done to help our students become productive citizens in our state and in the country.

5. In your view, are Alaskan public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

One of Alaska public schools biggest challenges is to attract and retain quality educators. Nineteen years ago, it took me three years to land a job in Alaska. At that time, the job fair in Anchorage attracted 750 applicants for roughly 150 job statewide. Presently, we are having a difficult time finding individuals from the lower 48 that are willing to move to Alaska to teach. Some of these individuals are not the quality teachers we need and many do not stay in state due to economic factors. I do believe that both at the district and state level we must look at salary

and benefits as one of the key factors to finding and keeping the very best educators to help us reform our public school system. Funding is an issue that needs to be examined.

6. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?

No, but I do believe it is an issue that needs to be examined. There are other issues that also need to be looked into including communication between school and home, engagement of parents in their children's education, teacher turnover, administrative turnover/ transfers, expectations of students and staff, staff development, differentiated instruction, etc.

7. What, in your opinion, is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?

If I could turn back the clock, I wish the legislature would have set up funding mechanisms in the 80s like that of the permanent fund. Since I cannot, I do not see any easy answers, especially in rural Alaska where there is little of no tax base to support the financing of public education. The state has provided the basis for public education and I can see how in the future we are going to face some tough times. I am eager to participate in discussions of alternative to our present system. It is going to be an interesting conversation.

8. What are some ideas, if any, that you think could improve public education in Alaska in general?

I have already mentioned a few ideas that have proven to be successful at my present school. I have included a few other ideas as well

1. Maintaining a stable teaching and administrative staff.
2. Engaging parents on a continual basis in their children's education.
3. Having high expectation of students and staff.
4. Making sure the needs of all students are met, differentiated instruction.
5. Providing a well-rounded curriculum for students that meets the wide range of needs that students have.
6. Streamlining the process of removing ineffective teachers from the classroom, while protecting due process rights.

9. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for their time and work. If appointed, how much time would you be able to devote?

I would be willing to devote as much time as needed to be an effective, contributing member of the task force.

10. Please provide any other information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of this Task Force.

I can provide a resume if you would like. Thanks for your consideration.

Lisa Espera Johnson

Educator

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1. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

I am a proud product of the Alaskan public school system: Harborview Elementary School, Marie-Drake Junior High School, Juneau-Douglas High School, and a BEd from the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. Continuing to build on my educational experience, success and legacy of Alaska's public school system, I became an elementary classroom teacher, teaching in a public school.

As a 16 1/2 year veteran teacher, I have taught in Anchorage's first federally recognized Blue Ribbon School, Northern Lights ABC K-8 School. I have taught 5th and 3rd grade, spent a year and half as an Educational Technology Teacher supporting eleven Title I schools and Tier II Intervention computer programs, and most recently have spent two years teaching as a 1st Grade primary teacher at Tudor Elementary, a Title I school.

I have a strong understanding of the unique needs of what an alternative education program requires, the unique situations and ability to adapt to a variety of school environments by working as an Itinerant Teacher, and now I have gone full circle by teaching in a low income, high risk Title I school.

Each of my professional education experiences give me a broad perspective and understanding of the diversity, demand and curricular expectations that accompany public education. Additionally, I understand and am aware of the plethora of programs that are available in the Anchorage School District such as, alternative education, open optional programs, charter schools with special emphasis on languages and cultures.

I believe that my perspective would be an asset to the Task Force. I want to support the efforts to develop a sustainable, consistent way of funding public education for Alaska's public schools and the students that they serve.

2. What strengths and/or skills would you bring to the task force?

My strengths lie in my diverse professional teaching experiences. My skills include strong communication, good research abilities, and strong organizational skills. I am also a professional educator.

Additionally, I have participated in professional development training through the local level Anchorage Education Association, state level National Education Association - Alaska, and national level, National Education Association. I have worked closely with colleagues from rural remote Alaskan communities, road system communities to large urban communities.

I am thorough and work collaboratively to achieve goals, as well as deeply passionate about the education of Alaska's children up to young adulthood.

3. Have you been a member of another task force before? If the answer is yes, please provide additional information.

No, I have never worked on a Alaska Force.

4. What's your view about the public education system in Alaska?

I believe that Alaska's public education has in many ways set the bar for the lower 48 states. In response to NCLB in the 90's, Alaska's public schools, administration, educators and support professionals worked in tandem to address the specialized and unique conditions that are specific to Alaska to meet the criteria's outlined by the federal monies.

Immediately the minimum scores for NCLB were set above the 80th percentile. Through the development of Alaska's own standardized tests and the proactive way that we have collaborated across the funding spectrum, we have worked to support the basic scores for student academic mastery. This is positive but education is not a test. We educate a whole child, developing productive, contributing citizens for the future.

At the same time, as a classroom teacher, I believe that more needs to be accomplished to provide school districts with regular, sustainable, funding to ensure that all schools are allowed access to; equipment and supplies, highly qualified teachers, highly-qualified support professionals, and current technology that would ultimately lead to continuing academic student success.

5. In your view, are Alaskan public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

Alaska public schools are not adequately funded. Flat funding does not meet the rising cost of educating Alaska's children.

6. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?

Increasing the BSA is a step in the right direction towards funding public education. However, we need a paradigm shift, a change in how we fund education. We need to develop a system that will ensure proactive funding for all aspects of public education now and in the future.

7. What, in your opinion, is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?

I have heard of several options all need to be considered and vetted for viability. I believe that funding of education needs to be set up as a stand alone system. It needs to be a system that replenishes itself through careful and meticulous investment.

8. What are some ideas, if any, that you think could improve public education in Alaska in general?

I am a teacher. Improving public education requires accountability from all the stake holders. Requiring early childhood education, mandating Kindergarten and changing the Truancy Law to include the correct ages of children and properly funding education that meets and/or exceeds inflation, we will see changes in performance based education.

I am also concerned about attracting and retaining highly qualified, dedicated professional educators and support professionals. With the added component of test scores to evaluation there is a degradation of the art of teaching and learning.

There needs to be a fact finding mission. Let's dispel the myths surrounding the failures of public schools. We need to look at the student successes and reaffirm to voters that public education works which is evident by the successful acquisition of scholarships! The public is not aware of the success that occurs in our public schools. We need to rebuild the relationship between the schools and the public.

9. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for their time and work. If appointed, how much time would you be able to devote?

I am a dedicated volunteer. I am willing to give as much time as necessary to complete the tasks of the committee.

10. Please provide any other information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of this Task Force.

I believe that I can bring a realistic view of public education in Alaska to the committee because I have gone through public schools to the graduate level, I work as an Educator in a public school and have had two children that went through the public school system.

I am passionate about educating children and want to bring my personal expertise to better funding for public education in Alaska.

Loretto Jones

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907. 586. 4280

1. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

Please consider this letter as my application for consideration as an appointed member of the Alaska State House Sustainable Education Task Force.

As an Alaskan educator who has taught Adult Basic Education classes, ESL and college preparatory/ developmental, and university courses in both rural and urban Alaska, I have a broad understanding of the crisis in the public education system and recognize the many challenges Alaska faces in improving public education.

2. What strengths and/or skills would you bring to the task force?

Part of being a university professor is participating in community service. I have served on the 2004 Long Term Strategic Planning Task Force with the University of Alaska Fairbanks and on the Juneau AWARE, Inc. and Harbor Boards. By serving on the Alaska State House Sustainable Education Task Force,

I would provide my expertise as a member of the National Institute for Literacy to generate viable solutions for education and find avenues for funding.

3. Have you been a member of another task force before? If the answer is yes, please provide additional information.

4. What's your view about the public education system in Alaska?

The public education system of Alaska has many challenges to address. Lack of funding to public schools, parent's unemployment and the high cost of living require both parents to work, thus curbing parental interaction and student accountability. The increased cost of technology and energy, and deteriorating infrastructures are impacting the cost of education, too. Teacher's retirement and health care costs, school maintenance, and construction are also part of the cost of education. However, with the influx of English language learners in K-12 and No Child Left Behind teachers are required to teach to the test. Many of their students do not speak English well enough to pass the test. No Child Left Behind makes this unreasonable and blatantly unfair to Alaska's students federal funding. Overcrowded classrooms and low pay for teachers provides no incentives for teaching as a career. We lose the best and the brightest teachers.

According to the Executive Summary from the National Institute for Literacy "low-income families and ethnic minority group, young children have little or no support at home to support their emerging literacy skills. In the year 2000, 37% of U.S. fourth graders failed to achieve basic levels of reading and writing achievement." In Alaska, the percentage is 47 %. Early education is important and we must better support public schools if we hope to increase student achievement. Parents and non-profits such as Catholic Community Services are attempting to fill in the cracks, however overcrowding classrooms does not create a learning environment. We must identify interventions, foster parenting activities and find creative solutions to adequately fund public schools.

5. In your view, are Alaskan public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

I have seen teachers teaching toward retirement with no interest in helping students learn. While I concur with school accountability, we must focus on not making this a blame game.

6. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?

7. What, in your opinion, is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?

The best way to fund public schools in Alaska as oil revenues decline is to closely look at Alaska fiscal management. The Alaska Permanent Fund is one possible solution.

Perhaps parents should donate a portion of their and their children's' dividends to their school. Tax large corporations and ask Goldbelt, Inc. and other Alaskan Native Corporations to help fund public education. We need to focus on kindergarten and grades 1-6 while improving math, science, and language arts. We need to get back to the basics: reading, writing and arithmetic to make education sustainable.

8. What are some ideas, if any, that you think could improve public education in Alaska in general?

9. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for their time and work. If appointed, how much time would you be able to devote?

If appointed, I would be able to donate ten hours a month.

10. Please provide any other information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of this Task Force.

Brad Keithley

Businessperson

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214-675-0038

1. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

Over the last few years I have spent a significant amount of time focusing on and writing about state fiscal policy. In its January 2013 report on Alaska fiscal policy, the University of Alaska-Anchorage's Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) concluded that, largely as a result of current Unrestricted General Fund (UGF) spending levels, Alaska does "not have enough cash in reserves to avoid a severe fiscal crunch soon after 2023, and with that fiscal crisis will come an economic crash." I am committed to helping identify solutions which avoid that crisis. While Health and Human Services has a significantly larger overall budget (largely as a result of federal funding sources), according to the Governor's FY 2014 10-year budget plan K-12 education spending is currently the largest category of UGF spending and, when combined with state higher education (UA) spending, will remain in that position at least until the end of the decade. Identifying the appropriate level of total state education funding within an overall budget context – and an effective means for keeping education funding within that level -- is one of the keys to bringing overall UGF spending back within sustainable levels and avoiding the cataclysmic consequences outlined in the ISER report.

2. What strengths and/or skills would you bring to the task force?

Over the last five years I have developed a significant understanding of state fiscal issues. I anticipate one contribution I would make is to help ensure that the Task Force appropriately considers education spending and policy issues within the context of their impact on overall state fiscal issues.

3. Have you been a member of another task force before? If the answer is yes, please provide additional information.

I have not previously served as a member of an Alaska or of a K-12 task force. I have previously served on a task force created by and advising the Oklahoma regional higher education system.

4. What's your view about the public education system in Alaska?

Generally speaking, I am concerned that the public education system (K-12 plus UA) is playing a significant role in pushing overall state spending above sustainable levels. Going forward, a combination of spending cuts – or at least spending stabilization – and alternative revenue sources may be required to maintain both state education funding and the overall state budget at sustainable levels.

5. In your view, are Alaskan public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

When viewed in isolation some might argue that the Alaska public education system (K12 plus UA) is underfunded relative to what it is trying to accomplish. In the context of overall budget policy, however, I am concerned that the draw of the public education system on state funding already is excessive. In FY 2014, for example, overall education spending (K-12 plus UA) constitutes roughly 30% of sustainable state spending levels.

While there is **some evidence** that level is within the norm among other states, there are other, unique demands on Alaska's spending priorities (e.g., transportation and infrastructure) that may mean that education spending is overweighted compared with Alaska's other priorities. In my view the question is as much fitting Alaska's education system within what Alaska can afford as it is funding the type of education system that some, in a perfect world, would like to have.

6. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?

Not necessarily. While increasing the BSA might enable the Alaska education system to more comfortably accomplish its aspirations, it is not clear that Alaska can afford the type of education system that some would like. Identifying what type of education system Alaskans can afford is as important as identifying what type of education system Alaskans want. The BSA level should be a result of the combination of the two discussions, not an objective in itself.

7. What, in your opinion, is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?

A combination of state, local and private (e.g., grant, donations) sources. State level funding should continue to come from the Unrestricted General Fund (rather than long-term dedicated sources) in order to avoid prioritizing some state needs over others. (I oppose creating a dedicated Transportation Fund for the same reason.)

8. What are some ideas, if any, that you think could improve public education in Alaska in general?

- A.** Require administrators to prioritize programs and needs to various budget levels so that it is clear what level of education system Alaskans will receive at a given level of funding.
- B.** Evaluate the application of managed competition principles and other, competition generating approaches to the Alaska education system as a means of incenting efficiency and cost reduction.
- C.** Significantly improving alumni and other private giving rates at the state's higher education institutions (which would reduce the burden on state funding).

11. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for their time and work. If appointed, how much time would you be able to devote?

15 – 20 hours per week.

12. Please provide any other information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of this Task Force.

My background and resume is attached as Appendix A.

Pete LaFrance

Educator

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(907) 775-7844

1. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

The issue of education funding is extremely important to the future of Alaska; as a seasoned educator who has worked within the contexts of numerous funding models, I believe I can offer a unique voice on this committee.

2. What strengths and/or skills would you bring to the task force?

I am a very organized person with a background in the sciences – I would bring an organized, measured and systematic approach to solving the problems faced by the task force. Furthermore, I recently worked as the Director of Technology for the International School of Luxembourg, and I bring to the table a depth of understanding regarding technology in education. As a Nationally Board Certified teacher, I have a command of cutting edge pedagogy and an understanding of how to apply it in the classroom. Finally, as a school administrator with a masters degree in Education Administration I understand the larger scale issues facing education.

3. Have you been a member of another task force before? If the answer is yes, please provide additional information.

No

4. What's your view about the public education system in Alaska?

As a graduate of the public education system in Alaska I have a very high regard for the system. Personally, I was able to use the education I received in Alaska as a foundation for a bachelors and masters degree, as well as a successful professional career. While there is room for improvement in any school system, I believe that the public education system in Alaska is largely sound. However, Alaska has a host of unique challenges when compared to many other states, and we need to approach these challenges with creativity while applying technology in effective ways – I am concerned about the schools that are failing, and while I was lucky enough to attend excellent schools, I want to work to ensure that all Alaskan students are well prepared for life.

5. In your view, are Alaskan public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

I believe that Alaskan public schools are for the most part adequately funded. Alaskan schools are well above the national average, teacher pay is fair, and it is rare that schools will not have the funding to meet their needs. Rural schools obviously have unique challenges and it is my understanding that the state compensates for this, but I would need additional information to fully state that bush schools are adequately funded, as I have little experience in that system.

6. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?

I think funding for schools is a difficult topic, as many stakeholders will always want to increase revenue. In my experience, using funds in smart, innovative ways is often more productive than simply adding more money to the pile.

7. What, in your opinion, is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?

I think the current structure goes a long way to meeting the needs of schools. However, due to the economic uncertainty that accompanies funding based on oil revenues, I think we need to get creative to ensure that children in Alaska receive a world-class education despite the price of oil. This may include the creation of a permanent fund for education, or some other alternate funding scheme. However, schools should be able to operate with the understanding that the state government will not drastically cut education funding with little to no notice.

8. What are some ideas, if any, that you think could improve public education in Alaska in general?

It is my experience that using technology wisely can increase the effectiveness and efficiency of education. Schools must have a plan in place for doing so, as well as a method of training teachers that ensures the best pedagogical practices for technology use are in place. Professional development of teachers is also an area that can benefit greatly from proper technology implementation. Studies indicate that appropriately implemented technology can substantially improve student performance. If done incorrectly however, it has little effect on learning. Therefore, I would suggest that the state provide appropriate guidance for schools as they adopt and implement technology.

9. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for their time and work. If appointed, how much time would you be able to devote?

I currently work at a middle school half time so I am prepared to devote a good deal of time to this endeavor.

10. Please provide any other information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of this Task Force.

Please feel free to view my online resume at www.petelafrance.com. I have twelve years of experience working in education, in both public and private schools as both a teacher and an administrator. I have a masters degree in Education Administration and have received my National Board Certification.

Cathy LeCompte

Educator

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907-786-4084

1. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

I am excited at the prospect of being a part of this conversation and would like to be appointed to the task force because I am a champion of education who will bring my passion and expertise for education on both secondary and post-secondary perspectives to the conversation, and because I am a citizen of the State of Alaska who cares deeply for the future of ALL our kids and feels compelled to be a participant in the process of helping students succeed in their educational pursuits.

2. What strengths and/or skills would you bring to the task force?

I would bring to the task force knowledge of the university system at both a small community level and statewide. I have been at the university since 2000, serving first as a faculty and statewide leader in e-learning in the School of Management at the University of Southeast Ketchikan campus then as the Ketchikan Campus Director; for the past three years I have served the University of Alaska Anchorage Community and Technical College as the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and statewide coalition leader for the Career Pathways Programs of Study dual enrollment initiative.

I would bring the perspective of a network of educators and business partners who have been having the conversation about education system reform for the past two years. Since 2011, I have been instrumental in getting over three hundred secondary and post-secondary educators and business and industry participants together for facilitated conversations about education and workforce development and how we could encourage statewide policy and the development of a framework to implement an education reform initiative for career and technical education in Alaska. Through these efforts I am familiar statewide district and regional educational activities, administrators, teachers and faculty in both secondary and post-secondary education, current research on career and technical education initiatives around the state and nation, national experts on the topic of career and technical education and dual enrollment reform movements plus personal experience in overcoming the challenges and struggles small communities face in providing educational services.

I would bring a workforce and education system perspective to the conversation when (as listed in HR8) “examining the efficiency and effectiveness of public education delivery in the state, including (1) the ability of the state’s public schools to prepare students for various rewarding careers;”. I work in post-secondary career and technical education and training (at the community and technical college) and am active in the Alaska Association for Career and Technical Education, a statewide professional organization for secondary and post-secondary career and technical educators and their business and industry partners. Career and Technical Education (CTE) is systemic change from traditional “voc-ed” and follows a model of integration of ACADEMIC coursework and TECHNICAL skills training aimed toward making ALL students prepared for various careers and higher education. A CTE delivery “system” should support and prepare students every step of the way – from elementary to secondary to

post-secondary education and ultimately into the workforce – for their next educational challenge. All too often I see students coming from secondary education unprepared for the rigors and different culture of post-secondary education. They experience setbacks financially and motivationally when they have to participate in remedial or other duplicative preparatory coursework. When frustrated by these setbacks they leave – often with substantial student debt. This scenario is not limited to career and technical education focused students – ALL students are susceptible to this experience. I do not mention this to lay blame on any one institution but to make the point that our lack of a system for ALL students limits their ability to develop critical technical, academic and personal skills to be successful during high school and beyond. It is time for us as a state to work together for positive student outcomes. I believe we can prepare our students for their future but it will take embracing new ideas and brave cooperation between government and education policy makers at the state and local levels to make the changes that will make a difference for our kids. I believe that this task force is designed to accomplish this cooperation and I would like to play a role.

In addition, I would bring to the task force my abilities as an innovative thinker, strategic problem solver, facilitator, collaborator and leadership development training professional and the skills necessary for leading and participating in systemic change and facilitating nonpartisan, student centered conversations.

3. Have you been a member of another task force before? If the answer is yes, please provide additional information.

No, I have not been a member of another task force of this type.

4. What’s your view about the public education system in Alaska?

My view of public education in Alaska is that of a system that has struggled through the years to determine a structure that will work in this geographically vast and culturally diverse state. From the days of the post statehood centralized State Operated School System to the 1975 decision to disband the system in favor of “local control” to the current blend of a little of each, I see that (not unlike the students we serve) the Alaska public education system is still struggling with what it wants to be “when it grows up”. I see policy makers and others continue to struggle with how to best serve our students and address the complex issues of high dropout rates, low graduation rates, continued low ranking nationally in college going students, a shortage of Alaskans available to step into a growing workforce, and a citizenry that is not prepared to compete in a global economy.

I believe there is potential for our education system to be responsive to the needs of our students and state but it will require some innovative education reform models that suit Alaska and include all stakeholders in the conversation. What I find most exciting is that because the state is not that big (population-wise) implementation of innovative educational reform would provide impact that we could “see” in a short amount of time and we would be able to experience the results of working together for the best interests of our students and our state sooner than later.

5. In your view, are Alaskan public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

In my opinion, it is not as much a question of “adequate” funding but more of shifting the view and conversation to taking what funding is available and prioritizing and collaborating to provide “adequate” educational opportunities for students. When we speak of “adequate” funding without a conversation about prioritizing OR collaborating there will never be enough funding available. Working together as a state and educational system to prioritize programming and encourage collaboration would make resource allocation or reallocation more than “adequate” and provide access for students to programs that may not have been available due to limited and siloed resources.

In another life, I was a grant funder for a small community United Way and there was never “adequate” funding to meet the demands of all the agencies. When the discussion of funding switched to prioritization of programs (based on a community asset map) and collaborative effort between agencies, the funding for meeting the community needs became “adequately” supported. Granted, this was a very time consuming process but well worth the effort to include all constituents and ensure they are heard and supported under a trustful relationship so real change could be supported.

6. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?

No, I do not believe that increasing the base student allocation across the board will solve any of the financial problems for public schools in Alaska. I think that if the base student allocation is increased to allow the schools to do more of the same, we will continue to get more of the same results – low graduation rates, high dropout rates, low college going enrollments, and an unprepared workforce.

State policymakers have the potential and opportunity to set policy that encourages innovative models, collaboration between secondary and post-secondary education, business and industry for positive student outcomes, and implementation of best practices initiatives that have had positive student outcomes across the state. Along with the policy comes the need to provide resources and accountability measures for implementation and performance of the new models. It is not business as usual in the education system – something has to give - more money doesn’t necessarily equate to more or better results.

7. What, in your opinion, is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?

I don’t think that I can answer this question at this time as I do not have enough information on the current funding structure, political climate for funding public schools or alternative models that could be useful in Alaska. Perhaps this task force will have the ability to conduct research on national reform models that could be modified to meet the unique needs of Alaska and if selected as a member of the task force I would be better equipped to have an opinion.

8. What are some ideas, if any, that you think could improve public education in Alaska in general?

My idea is to build Career Pathways system that would provide career and technical education for ALL students in Alaska. A Career Pathway is a connected program of study that merges a program of study from secondary career and technical education to a program of study from post-secondary career and technical education and integrates student support services, college

knowledge activities, and dual enrollment best practices to facilitate transitions between high school and college and leads to a certificate or degree.

Research in other states implementing the Career Pathways model indicates that this model serves ALL students regardless of their education and career goals because Career Pathways include both technical skills training for career readiness and academic rigor for college readiness reducing the need for remediated course work. A data collection protocol is a critical part of this model for sustainability. It supports an evaluation mechanism for research on effectiveness of student outcomes, accountability to funders and serves to inform a continuous improvement process in the model.

Additional student success outcomes include:

1. Students are more engaged in the career and technical education applied teaching and learning strategies and this engagement reduces dropout rates and increases graduation rates.
2. Students can earn high school and college credit through aligned secondary and post-secondary academic and career and technical education curriculum.
3. Students “experience” life as college students through rigorous course offerings either on a high school or college campus that follow a college syllabus and have all the expectations of participation in college.
4. Students, parents and educators are aware of what the students are learning and what the student needs to learn through regular assessments that align with the technical and academic skills they need to successfully progress along the pathway. Students set goals and see their future and potential for careers and further education through the development and ongoing review of personal learning and career plans.
5. Students have access to practical experiences in a chosen career field through applied work based learning.

9. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for their time and work. If appointed, how much time would you be able to devote?

I could devote a fair amount of time to meetings and work outside the meetings as I have support from my employer as this is critical to the work of the community and technical college and beyond. Travel stipends would be appreciated for travel outside of Anchorage.

10. Please provide any other information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of this Task Force.

I know firsthand how challenging it can be to get an education. I was a nontraditional first generation college student working two jobs to support myself and my children. As a single Mom, I raised and supported two girls through to achieving a high school diploma and a higher education – one took the traditional path of completing high school to completing college to becoming a preschool teacher and the other took a more nontraditional path of truancy due to non interest in high school to working in three fast food jobs then deciding to go to college for a business education (actually daughter number two’s path is the more traditional one these days). Both are contributing citizens who work to support themselves and their beautiful families. I believe in the life changing power of education, whether one takes the traditional or the

nontraditional path, and regardless of choice, our educational system should support and welcome students to success. I would be honored to be a part of building this system.

Sue Liebner

Educator

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907-223-9921

1. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

I am submitting my application in response to HR 8 asking for members of the public to volunteer their time and expertise to serve on this committee.

I would like to be appointed to this task force as I have been an educator in Alaska for over 35 years serving Kodiak Island Borough School District, Kenai Peninsula Borough School District, Bering Strait School District, and the Anchorage School District. My educational expertise spans elementary, middle and high school, and as an adjunct professor for UAA Kenai, UAA Anchorage, and UAF Nome branches teaching undergraduate and graduate courses to educators.

2. What strengths and/or skills would you bring to the task force?

My skills as an administrator; principal at North Star Elementary in Nikiski, district office administrator in Unalakleet, and a principal at College Gate Elementary in Anchorage, as well as a teacher in 1st through 10th grades, have prepared me to continue the profession as an educational consultant.

3. Have you been a member of another task force before? If the answer is yes, please provide additional information.

In the spring of 2012, I was appointed by EED commissioner Mike Hanley to sit on the Moore Collaborative Committee as stated in the Settlement Agreement of Moore vs. State of Alaska. The committee's agenda is to advise as to program design, grant documents, funding allocations and implementation intended for broad collaboration on establishing effective programs of the forty schools in Alaska with the lowest scores on the Modified School Growth Index for the previous three years. I am currently serving on this committee for least another year or two.

4. What's your view about the public education system in Alaska?

The public educational system in Alaska has many successes and many challenges. In all four districts in which I have worked, I have been witness to Alaskan educators' hard work in implementing effective programs within each school and district following curriculum guidelines and Common Core standards yet they face many challenges living in the bush away from family and friends. Alaska's universities have been successful in offering continuous course work to keep our educators up-to-date on research-based frameworks for effective instructional and assessments practices. The list goes on and on yet funding is always a concern.

5. In your view, are Alaskan public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

Since all Alaskan school districts face numerous challenges in many different ways due to our regional diversity, I would say most public schools are not adequately funded and/or districts are not using the money as wisely as possible. Therefore, I believe that our state should increase the Base Student Allocation and tag a percentage for basic student attendance and achievement, if possible.

- 6. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?**
- 7. What, in your opinion, is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?**
- 8. What are some ideas, if any, that you think could improve public education in Alaska in general?**

An idea for improving public education is to focus on instructional frameworks featuring vocational education in ALL schools beginning at the elementary level. A simple task of polling young adults in the villages to research what they are currently doing for their community and/or what would have helped them - while in school - to focus on a life-long career path and community stewardship. The Anchorage School District has vocational based schools with full enrollments and many successful graduates. Bush schools have the potential to have more vocational focused schools if funding is appropriated.

- 9. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for their time and work. If appointed, how much time would you be able to devote?**

As a retired educator, I have the time and energy to serve the public on this task force committee. I offer my expertise and collaboration experience to work with task force members to find solutions toward sustainable education for all children in this fine state.

- 10. Please provide any other information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of this Task Force.**

Patricia Linville

Email:

907-224-4008

1. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

Recently, while discussing my possible retirement with a friend I was asked how I would keep busy. I replied that I would like to work on fixing our education system. Although my friend and I agreed education funding reform is a daunting task, when I saw the announcement for the Alaska State House Sustainable Education Task Force I saw an opportunity to become involved rather than stand on the sidelines and criticize.

2. What strengths and /or skills would you bring to the task force?

I taught for a total of nine years and subbed another 3 years prior to becoming a public librarian. I received a Bachelor of Science (BS) in Elementary Education and a BS Child Development (University of Idaho, 1975) and a Masters of Library Science (University of Arizona 1996). In 1998 I became the Director of the Seward Community Library Museum, where I remain today. I am a retiree in the Teachers Retirement System and have a Retired/Lifetime certification status. Throughout my career I have taken many continuing education/professional development classes, becoming a Certified Public Library Administrator in 2008. As a teacher I worked as a regular classroom teacher in a traditional school (Kenai's Sears Elementary) and as one of two teachers in Moose Pass School. I have three children, two of whom graduated from the traditional educational program and one who was homeschooled throughout high school. These experiences have allowed me to experience Alaska's education system from many perspectives and I intend to draw from all of them when contemplating how to make Alaska's education system sustainable, equitable and world class.

3. Have you been a member of another task force before? If the answer is yes, please provide additional information.

No, I have never been a member of a task force before, however as of March 2013 I am a Public Library Representative on the Governor's Advisory Council on Libraries.

4. What's your view about the public education system in Alaska?

Above average students, with strong parental support, who live in the larger communities are in the best position to benefit from our current system. But those who have only one or two of those three attributes have a harder time navigating the system to obtain the type of quality education that will assist them in becoming capable, sustainable income earning Alaskans.

5. In your view, are Alaska public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

I have spoken with many educators throughout my career. I've heard Anchorage and Fairbanks teachers worried that they are in danger of losing their library aids, while in Seward there are no librarians. I recently spoke to young teachers who, while teaching "in the Bush," had to take cold showers because the village school district didn't have enough funds to pay for hot water in teacher housing. In the past I personally funded one child's music lessons while my other child's lessons were paid for by a state funded cyber school. There seem to be varying degrees of

funding inadequacy depending on who is talking. For many all funding is inadequate. I believe there are funding inadequacies in some areas but duplication and inefficiency in others.

6. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?

No. The Base Student Allocation must be reviewed. Just “throwing money at the problem” is not a solution, especially for the long term.

7. What in your opinion is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?

I really don't have a concrete answer for this question. Alaska's goal for education should be quality first at the most affordable price. However, providing a one size fits all approach to such diverse areas and populations can be daunting and not necessarily successful. My gut feeling is that local communities have standards and values of education that, when recognized and nurtured, will build stronger communities and better educated students. More local control in funding allocations may be a good starting point.

8. What are some ideas, if any, that you think could improve public education in Alaska in general?

As a public librarian, I witness both traditional and non-traditional education delivery systems. In practice, our public library provides curriculum support for homeschoolers by default. These programs, whether or not connected to an Alaskan school district, always bring in parents and students looking for materials to support their curriculum. We also are asked to proctor tests for students who are taking on-line classes outside of their traditional classroom. These students are taking courses that are more challenging and/or subject matter not offered in the very basic selection of courses found in most small and medium sized high schools. Generally, the students who are homeschooled and taking extra classes have very supportive parents influencing their educational path. It would seem more efficient and inclusive if these opportunities were integrated into the traditional delivery methods of Alaskan schools.

9. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for their time and work. If appointed, how much time would you be able to devote?

As stated I am currently employed by the City of Seward as the Library Museum Director. I have notified my supervisor of my interest in this Task Force and he has given me permission to apply and attend the required meetings.

10. Please provide any other information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of The Task Force.

I am neither mathematician nor accountant. My perspective would be not only educator but that of education consumer. If chosen to serve on the task force I would work to help to create a funding mechanism that is fiscally responsible yet serves the best interests of all the various demographics of our state. Fundamentally, I am not totally convinced that more funding is always the best answer. If we look at the whole picture and project into the future the consequences of each proposal we should be able to create an education funding mechanism for our state that will serve as a model for others.

Agnes Moran

Businessperson

Email: agnesm@kgbak.us

1. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

As a member of the Board of Directors of First Bank, I am concerned with low achievement rates and poor performance in our schools. As a member of the Assembly of the Ketchikan Gateway Borough, I see first-hand the severe fiscal impact that comes with local responsibility to operate a school district. As a citizen, I recognize that our state and federal governments are facing significant fiscal challenges and that these challenges will impact their abilities to fund services. And most importantly, as a parent of two school-aged children, I want our schools to excel. State and local spending on education has increased significantly in recent years while student achievement rates have stagnated. In light of declining state revenues, we must determine the most effective use of our education dollars so that all of our children can achieve and be prepared to successfully move from the classroom to their chosen career path.

2. What strengths and skills would you bring to the task force?

In order to perform the duties of the Task Force, members are going to have to work hard and make tough decisions. I have demonstrated these abilities during my tenure on the Assembly of the Ketchikan Gateway Borough. I have the background, motivation and will to help the Task Force succeed. As a parent of two school aged children, one in public and the other in private school, I have a vested interest in quality education. As a locally elected official, I have been working on education funding issues and I am very familiar with the challenges of trying to maximize education funding while maintaining an affordable tax structure. As a bank director I appreciate how challenging it can be to find quality, competent employees.

3. Have you been a member of another task force before? If the answer is yes, please provide additional information.

I have not been a member of a task force. I am currently on the Board of Directors of Alaska Municipal League and, as noted above, a member of the Ketchikan Gateway Borough Assembly.

4. What's your view about the public education system in Alaska?

The quality of education is inconsistent across the 53 districts in Alaska and does not reflect the significant investment that has been made in education by the State of Alaska federal government and the 34 city and borough governments that operate school districts in Alaska.

5. In your view, are Alaskan public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

I believe Alaskan schools are adequately funded but are not equitably funded. I believe we need more transparency out of DD so that we can determine how our education dollars are being utilized on the ground in all school districts, including REAAs, across the state.

6. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?

While adequate funding for basic education is important, the facts show that there is no correlation between funding beyond Basic Need and performance. Many of the best-funded

schools in Alaska perform poorly in several critical measures. Meanwhile some districts that provide no local funding to supplement Basic Need funding perform well in many areas. Until we can figure out how to get the most value for our education dollars, an increase in the Base Student Allocation is not the solution.

7. What, in your opinion, is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?

I think the state needs to equitably fund all students independent of whether they attend an REAA, city, or borough run school district. I think every community should contribute to funding their schools. I think DEED should carefully monitor all sources of revenue for districts to ensure that monies are not being sheltered locally that should be allocated back to the state for general education funding. I think we need greater transparency in how districts across the state are utilizing education funds to ensure they are being used to the greatest benefit of our students.

8. What are some ideas, if any; that you think could improve public education in Alaska in general?

I am a strong supporter of school choice. Parents have the primary responsibility to determine what is best for their child. We need to reengage parents in the education of their children; having parents take charge of choosing what is the best educational environment for their child is one way to accomplish this.

9. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for their time and work. If appointed, how much time would you be able to devote?

Education funding is a very important issue for me. I am willing to devote as much time as necessary to see that the Task Force has a quality report to deliver to the legislature on January 1, 2014.

10. Please provide any information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of the Task Force.

Education funding is a complex, perplexing and emotional issue; but it is one that it is critical that we get right. Recent history has demonstrated that allocating ever increasing funds to education does not guarantee a consistent, quality outcome. I think it is imperative that the state embark upon an in depth review of education funding before increasing the Base Student Allocation or making other major changes. I applaud the sponsors of House Resolve 7 for undertaking this effort. I would welcome the opportunity to work with you directly on the Task Force or support your efforts in any way I can.

David Nees

Educator

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(907) 522-1118

1. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

Education is Alaska needs major reform a clear set of expectations accountability, and a clear curriculum

2. What strengths and/or skills would you bring to the task force?

28 years of teaching in Anchorage. 75 seasons of coaching, team builder. Highly organized, driven, love research

3. Have you been a member of another task force before? If the answer is yes, please provide additional information.

No

4. What's your view about the public education system in Alaska?

I feel strongly that the education system in Alaska has great potential but cannot effect change from the inside, it needs a clear set of expectations accountability, and a clear curriculum

5. In your view, are Alaskan public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

Funding is not the problem, there is more than enough being spent The state DEED has a requirement of 75% the funding goes to "instruction" but it does not have a definition of instruction.

6. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?

No

7. What, in your opinion, is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?

Clarify what can be spent outside of instruction in district budgets.

8. What are some ideas, if any, that you think could improve public education in Alaska in general?

You have to follow Texas and Mass.in the partnership between education and the state. Take over failing districts, promote community groups to take over failing schools, open schools to competition, demand high results, reward success punish failure. The DEED plan for exemption from NCLB has none of these in place intact attendance not performance will earn schools a passing mark, this is unacceptable.

9. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for their time and work. If appointed, how much time would you able to devote?

24 -30 hours a week

10. Please provide any other information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of this Task Force.

I will give you references, Tom Fink, David Boyle, Bethany Marcum, Senator Mike Dunleavy

Thomas S. Obermeyer

Email: tsobermeyer@gci.net

907-278-9455

As staff to Senator Bettye Davis, Vice-Chair, Senate Education Committee for six years and an Alaska Resident for 35 years, my wife, an educator and Ph.D. and I have six graduate degrees between us and know and value education. We have raised and educated our four children here in the public school system in Anchorage. Two are physicians, one is an occupational therapist, and one is a teacher. My experience in working for the Legislature fostered my sustaining interest in trying to provide the best education to our youth. It exposed me to the mechanics of the Foundation Formula, impact of the Moore Decision, educational disparities in rural Alaska, increased funding for Voc-Tech, students with disabilities, and the Alaska Performance Scholarship.

We all want the same thing for our students: a strong K-12 education available to all with college or job opportunities after graduation. I worked as a public volunteer on the Physician Supply Task Force in Alaska; as a staffer for Senator Bettye Davis to the Alaska State Health Care Commission and the Alaska State Medicaid Task Force. I have drafted and presented before Legislative committees many education bills, involving Pre-K, K-20, the high school Exit Exam, increases in BSA, and others. I also have considerable business experience.

Despite criticism of excessive administrative costs, lack of teacher qualifications, accountability, and waste, Alaska has a good public school system, talented and concerned professionals at the state and local levels. Increasing the Base Student Allocation which has been flat-lined for four years is needed just to maintain the status quo. I do not have all the answers, which is the purpose of the task force. Anticipating reduced revenues from oil taxes until incentives for increased production fills the gap, education must be more creative in sharing state revenue. Clearly, tele-education, computers, and high speed Internet across Alaska are keys to more efficient and cost-effective delivery.

I would like to be part of the task force responsible for sustaining a strong educational system and moving Alaska forward in quality K-12 to K-16. My resume is attached.

Sincerely,

Thomas S. Obermeyer

Deena Paramo

Email: deena.paramo@matsuk12.us

907-631-2679

1. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

I am seeking membership on the Sustainable Education Task Force (SETF) to further the educational opportunities and programs in our slate. It is evident in education, as in every other sector in Alaska, that cost containment and efficiencies must be made in public spending. While keeping Alaska's educational opportunities competitive, I seek to find efficiencies in our educational structure so that our students are provided an education--- good opportunities and programs--- to keep them on par (or better) with students from around our nation and world.

2. What strengths and/or skills would you bring to the task force?

The strengths and competencies I bring to the table for the SETF are many. I have experience as a superintendent of the second largest school district in Alaska, working with a diverse population as well as a large education budget. Schools in Mat-Su range from a one-room school house to multiple comprehensive high schools. This provides a perspective of large and small communities. I have an understanding of schools and schooling and the change that must take place in our programs to keep Alaska kids on top.

3. Have you been a member of another task force before? If the answer is yes, please provide additional information.

I have not been a member of another task force.

4. What's your view about the public education system in Alaska?

The public education system in Alaska has its high points and low points. I wish I could say that all is good, but students continue to graduate without the skills needed to tackle the multi-faceted world they enter. I see the Sustainable Education Task Force focusing on what works to share the information statewide so that all Alaskans benefit from a top notch public education.

5. In your view, are Alaskan public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

Alaska certainly spends quite a bit of money on public education. Even in a community such as mine, the state pays 75% of the cost to educate our youth. While more money would make things easier, it is not the answer. Efficiencies and effective programs must be sought to provide a smarter way of doing business. I do not agree in paying for programs that have a track record of failure.

6. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?

Raising funds in the BSA will not solve the fiscal issues, Alaska must look at ways to be more efficient in our services and programs to our students and teachers.

7. What, in your opinion, is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?

I am not sine of the best way to fund public education, but I do see that local support is warranted in our communities. MSBSD is fortunate to have a local government support its

schools. I believe local communities will pay for value. Schools must meet the local needs of the communities in which they are located, if the local communities are to support education.

8. What are some ideas, if any, that you think could improve public education in Alaska in general?

I look to policy change to ensure sustainable education in our state. Many times, districts cannot make the changes alone at the local level. A unified effort of local and state support will keep Alaska schools moving forward.

9. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for their time and work. If appointed, how much time would you be able to devote?

I do have time to devote to this cause. We must begin to make the necessary changes in public education for it to survive.

10. Please provide any other information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of this Task Force.

I have a high competency in data and research. My doctorate is focused on learning assessment and system performance. Also, I believe in our talents as a state both in state and local government as well as in schools, families, and communities to find the best answer for public education in Alaska.

Paula Pawlowski

Businessperson

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1. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

I have spent 35 plus years as a volunteer in the educational system of not just Alaska but also in other states where my children have attended school. I am passionate that every child deserves the best education available. I think Alaska has the obligation to our children, our future, for that opportunity.

2. What strengths and/or skills would you bring to the task force?

A knowledge base of other states and Alaska's educational system. I spent five years on the State Board of Education, ten years as a trainer for National PTA and 4 years as a mentor for other states for NPTA. I come to education first and foremost as both a parent and a grandparent. As Alaska PTA President (1997-1999) I was able to travel both to urban and rural areas and have provided workshops in both urban and rural areas. I spent ten years as a home day care provider in two states while my husband was deployed at sea and our family has hosted three exchange students (AFS) and my son has been an AFS Abroad student. If we were not hosting we were involved with AFS and experienced exposure to many different education systems worldwide.

3. Have you been a member of another task force before? If the answer is yes, please provide additional information.

The most recent 'task force' for the Legislature's Higher Education Task Force, I was not a voting member but as a PTA member was able to attend all of the sessions across Alaska.

4. What's your view about the public education system in Alaska?

I was raised as an Air Force Brat and my children were raised in a military family. Experiencing many educational systems in other states my husband and I worked hard to have all three of our children graduate from West High School in Anchorage, sometimes at personal sacrifice. Alaska's educational system while not perfect is our choice. Alaska also has many choices for families that allow the educational system fit the family.

5. In your view, are Alaskan public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

I believe that there are many questions that will need to be asked and answered to meet adequacy.

6. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?

I do not believe that increasing the BSA is the only way to solve the funding for education.

7. What, in your opinion, is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?

I am curious about the possibilities of funding and what that would look like.

8. What are some ideas, if any, that you think could improve public education in Alaska in general?

There are over 40 years of research demonstrating success when parents are actively in their child's education. The difficulty for educators is to know what that looks like and how to implement authentic parental engagement.

9. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for their time and work. If appointed, how much time would you be able to devote?

I am currently retired and serve on the Alaska Commission on Aging but do not see any conflicts that would keep me from serving.

10. Please provide any other information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of this Task Force.

I would come to this task with an independent lens and work towards possible solutions but I am not shy about negotiating the solutions.

Chris Reitan

Educator

Email: chris.reitan@galenanet.com

907-656-1205



GALENA CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

GALENA, ALASKA 99741
PHONE (907) 656-1205
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SUPERINTENDENT
Chris Reitan

Re: Application for the Alaska State House Sustainable Education Task Force

Dear Representative Wilson and Gattis:

I'm writing this letter to seek appoint to the Alaska House Sustainable Education Task Force. As a long time Alaska rural educator and as the superintendent of Galena City School District I believe my background and experiences provide a unique perspective to this task adding value to our state's discussions regarding our collective next steps to improve public education in Alaska.

My experiences with Galena City School District have provided me unique experiences in public education in our state. 16 of my 20 years in public education career have been with Galena City School District. Starting as a teacher at our high school boarding school (Galena Interior Learning Academy) and then working as an assistant principal, principal, assistant superintendent, and now superintendent in our district has afforded me experiences in one of Alaska's most diverse and dynamic school districts. Galena City School District has built its programs around the value of developing high quality choices for students and families. Galena City School District operates the largest correspondence/home school program in the state (Interior Distance Education of Alaska); the second largest high school boarding school program with a strong career and technical education focus (Galena Interior Learning Academy); and arguably one of the state's finest PreK-12 community schools (Sidney C. Huntington School).

I am proud to be a public educator in this state. Our unique geographic differences provide a fertile environment for community based educational programs to develop. I also believe that Alaska needs a fertile funding stream so that our high quality programs can continue to add value to the programming they already provide. Much discussion has centered on the Base Student Allocation (BSA) during the last couple of years especially the need to increase the BSA so that school districts can keep up with the cost of inflation. I believe that an adjustment to the BSA is necessary. I also believe that in conjunction with an adjustment that we need to analyze as a state all the different ways that we can leverage our dollars knowing that the maximum amount possible is geared towards instructional programming. Moving towards a self-funded insurance plan for all state educators is one important step towards ensuring that we can leverage our educational dollars towards the students' classroom experiences. Galena City School District has self-funded our health insurance for the past decade which has allowed our employees to take ownership of our insurance plan and provided high quality insurance at a very reasonable cost to the district and our employees. Most importantly we know exactly what our true health insurance costs are on an annual basis. I steadfastly believe that getting a handle on the high costs of health insurance by moving towards a state "self-funded" plan for all public educators is one critical first step to improve education. This would allow all school districts to participate in a larger insurance pool, would decrease costs for school districts leveraging more dollars towards the classroom, would allow all districts to know the true costs of medical insurance on an annual basis, and would provide districts a voice in shaping what insurance coverage best meet our collective needs.

Furthermore, I resolutely believe that expanding high school boarding school programs must play a significant part in improving our public education model, especially the development of boarding school programs that blend a strong academic focus with a robust career and technical education course offerings. It is impossible for schools to be everything to every student in the state. However, we can be strategic and develop boarding school programs that develop career and technical education programs that are geared to

that specific region, that align with the employment opportunities of the region, and provide choices for students from all regions of the state. Boarding schools have always played a role in the educational processes in Alaska. Boarding schools must continue serving a significant role ensuring students' access to more varied educational opportunities, teachers that are highly qualified in their areas of expertise, and a more robust core academic, career and technical education, and elective course schedule.

In closing my teaching and administrative experiences has provided me access to developing some of the state's strongest educational programs and that these experiences should be considered as a significant part of our state's collective efforts to improve our entire public education model. I also believe that in this process that we can't lose sight of the importance of strong, vital community based schools. If appointed I would be able to serve through the duration of the task force. Thank you for taking on this important task and thank you for considering my application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris Reitan", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Chris Reitan, GCSD Superintendent
Email: chris.reitan@galenanet.com

Rex Rock

I am nominating Rex Rock, President and CEO of the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation for either the business person or Native Alaskan Regional Corporation seat on the Alaska State House Sustainable Education Task Force. Mr. Rock has authorized me to nominate him for this role.

I asked Mr. Rock to serve on your Task Force because of his understanding of schools and rural education in particular. He has long volunteered his services to the North Slope Borough School District (NSBSD) and Tikigaq School in his home community of Point Hope in particular.

Mr. Rock has served as a member and chair of the Tikigaq School Advisory Committee. In that role he became familiar with both the policy level and the day-to-day work of our largest pre-K to 12th grade school. Each year the Tikigaq School Advisory Council made a recommendation of funding level to the NSBSD Board of Education.

Mr. Rock also served on the North Slope Borough Assembly. The Assembly generously funds the NSBSD. Over time, Assembly members become familiar with the state and local funding mechanisms of the district. Each year, the Borough Assembly considers the district's budget request that is based on the required local contribution and the maximum local contribution set by the State Foundation Formula.

I appreciate your leadership in chairing this Task Force. I appreciate Mr. Rock's willingness to contribute to the education of the students of NSBSD and the state by serving on this Task Force. Thank you for your consideration of this nomination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peggy Cowan", with a stylized, flowing script.

Peggy Cowan
Superintendent

Box 169 Barrow, Alaska 99723 (907) 852-5311

Christopher Simon

Educator

Email: chris.simon@alaska.gov

907- 451-2355

1. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

I am interested in serving on this task force for several reasons and the main one is that I would like to make a positive impact upon education in Alaska. Secondly, I would like to see the schools continue building a successful partnership with families and communities in rural Alaska

2. What strengths and/or skills would you bring to the task force?

The strengths and skills I would bring are:

Strengths

- Good listener
- Integrity
- Open-minded
- Raised in rural Alaska

Skills:

- School and district administration
- Leadership
- Public Speaking
- School Improvement
- Professional Evaluations

3. Have you been a member of another task force before? If the answer is yes, please provide additional information.

I have never been a member of another task force.

4. What's your view about the public education system in Alaska?

I believe the public education system has improved the academic level of the young people since the inception of standards across the state. There has been an increase in the focus on student academic achievement based upon data. In addition, the new teacher and content-area coaching have made a positive impact for the staff and students in rural Alaska, especially since 64% of the teachers hired are from the Lower 48. I am happy to see new schools being constructed in the Rural Educational Attendance Areas.

5. In your view, are Alaskan public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

In my view, Alaska public schools are adequately funded based upon the teacher to student ratios. At the end of the day, it is up to the local districts to set priorities and decide where to allocate funding. The State of Alaska is also targeting resource grants to the 40 lowest performing schools in the state.

6. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?

I do not believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most of the problems for public schools. I believe active parenting will have a much larger and positive impact on the quality of the education any student receives.

7. What, in your opinion, is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?

I consider the current system of funding public schools sufficient. I say this because this system was developed over decades and has been modified several times to meet current situations.

8. What are some ideas, if any, that you think could improve public education in Alaska in general?

I think to improve the education system would take numerous approaches. The first is to actively engage the parents in their child(s) education. Second would be to find methods to motivate students academically and third would be to return the teacher retirement system to 20 years. Also, we need to recruit more Alaskans to join the education profession, especially from rural Alaska to reduce the turnover rate.

9. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for their time and work. If appointed, how much time would you be able to devote?

I believe I would be able to devote up to 8 hours per week if selected as a Task Force member.

10. Please provide any other information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of this Task Force.

Additional information about qualifications include that I have twenty years of serving as a rural educator in Alaska which gives me a valuable insight into far north education.

Thank you for your time and consideration and I look forward to hearing from you.

Don Smith

Businessperson

Email: akreg@gci.net

907-529-6170

1. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

I would like to have my name considered for appointment to the Alaska State House Sustainable Education Task Force. I would appreciate consideration for one of the two business categories. I have tried to follow your suggested outline in the press release.

2. What strengths and/or skills would you bring to the task force?

I believe that I would bring the experiences of a 74 year resident of Alaska who has attended Alaskan schools. I am also a graduate of the University of Alaska - Fairbanks.

I have spent 19 1/2 years of my life as an elected official in Alaska. My most recent service was membership on the seven member Anchorage School Board - serving from 2010 to 2013. In 1965 I served on the Greater Anchorage Borough Assembly. In 1966 - 67 I served Anchorage (area-wide) as a member of the Alaska State House of Representatives. In the early 70's I was elected to the Anchorage Area Charter Commission. In 1975 I was elected to the eleven member Anchorage Municipal Assembly and served until 1985.

3. Have you been a member of another task force before? If the answer is yes, please provide additional information.

In 1985 President Reagan appointed me to the National Advisory Council on Continuing Education. I was one of 12 Presidential appointees. I was also appointed by President Reagan (1981) to the 46 member Presidential Advisory Committee on Federalism.

4. What's your view about the public education system in Alaska?

Alaska is facing significant fiscal issues which will impact our ability to provide adequate governmental services and it will impact our ability to provide quality education to its children. The current Anchorage School District budget is now over \$800 million dollars - educating approximately 49,000 students.

Alaska's Constitution in article 7 - section 1 requires the Legislature by General Law to establish and maintain a system of public schools open to all children of the state.....

I believe that the State of Alaska has a significant responsibility to provide great educational opportunities for all its children. I do however support the concept of allowing for different kinds of educational opportunities such as Charter Schools.

5. In your view, are Alaskan public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

Funding of public education in Alaska must be done in a way that allows for different forms of education. Each child and their parents are entitled to equal treatment which in my opinion would see state and local funds being spent equally to all. In Anchorage we spend

approximately \$16,500 per child. Parents should be allowed to pick and choose the education for their children and those dollars should be allowed to move to the school of their choice.

Regarding funding - I believe if we were to eliminate some of the Federal and State requirements regarding how districts must educate children we would have sufficient funding. As a former ASD Board Member, I would gladly have not accepted Federal money in exchange for eliminating all of the rules and requirements that are attached to those dollars.

6. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?

The Base Student Allocation is adequate if the State of Alaska keeps up with inflation. Dollars spent today without inflation added causes significant reductions in school district programs. Yesterday I was at the grocery store and paid \$4.59 for a basic loaf of bread.

7. What, in your opinion, is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?

My opinion on the best way to fund public schools would be to give greater flexibility in the way districts operate. What works in Anchorage may not work in Nome or Ketchikan or in Galena. The state needs to allow greater flexibility in the way the district is operated.

My last year on the ASD Board saw over 200 positions being eliminated. The current board is facing similar cuts this year and for many years to come. I would guess that you will see another 200 teachers and staff positions eliminated in the next fiscal year.

8. What are some ideas, if any, that you think could improve public education in Alaska in general?

We need to be more innovative in the way we educate our children. Current laws assume that all children are the same. That is not correct. The emphasis seems to be focused on low income, minority and otherwise disadvantaged students. While these problems need to be addressed, we also need to make sure that the "other" children are also afforded a chance at an equal education. I worked hard as a member of the Anchorage School Board to make sure that we greatly expanded programs for career and technical education. My three years on the ASD Board saw major changes occur to the CTE programs in the middle schools and expanded programs in the high schools.

9. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for their time and work. If appointed, how much time would you be able to devote?

10. Please provide any other information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of this Task Force.

Thank you for allowing me a chance to offer my experience in trying to solve the K-12 education system in Alaska. If you have any questions, I can be reached at 529-6170.

Dale Smythe

Businessperson

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907-382-4052

1. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

As a lifelong resident of Alaska and a school designer I have seen firsthand the challenges with planning, building and maintaining facilities in rural Alaska. I would like the opportunity to use my experience to work with a team to improve the planning, funding, design and maintenance of educational facilities to insure and improve educational access to all students.

2. What strengths and/or skills would you bring to the task force?

I have been an architect and project manager focusing on rural Alaska school design for the last 12 years. In this time I have been able to see how current DEED requirements for limiting square footage have an unintended impact on energy efficiency in envelopes and space for more efficient mechanical equipment. I have been involved in condition surveys and reviewed energy audits on many existing facilities and understand that the cost of maintaining and operating these facilities during their life is far higher than the cost of construction. I understand there is a balance involved in meeting educational needs, budget needs and operational cost needs. I have been working with the project managers and staff at school districts that are in charge of the maintenance and operation to better understand the operational challenges of running the facilities after construction. I have worked on teams to coordinate with local utilities to plan projects that are able to co-locate fuel farms and power generation to take advantage of waste heat recovery and shared marine headers. My goals when working with school districts is to plan and construct facilities that meet all the district's needs, DEED requirements while also providing maintainable and energy efficient solutions.

3. Have you been a member of another task force before? If the answer is yes, please provide additional information.

No I have not.

4. What's your view about the public education system in Alaska?

From my perspective there are a lot of talented, high quality people doing the best they can within the boundaries they have to provide high quality education all over this state.

5. In your view, are Alaskan public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

I believe that we could be doing more with the money we have. There is still room for improvement in the maintenance of existing buildings that could create savings for new construction or renovation efforts.

6. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?

At this time I believe that the existing funds can be used more efficiently. I feel investment on energy upgrades has the potential to save money on operational costs that in turn could be reinvested back into the public school program.

7. What, in your opinion, is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?

I do not take issue with the current methods for schools funding. I am more familiar with the Capital Improvement Projects grant application process than I am with the legislative funding process.

8. What are some ideas, if any, that you think could improve public education in Alaska in general?

Increase the energy efficiency of the existing buildings with equipment upgrades and training for staff in operation and maintenance, then use that savings to repair existing facilities and supplement funding for replacement construction.

9. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for their time and work. If appointed, how much time would you able to devote?

I believe that I could realistically give 5 to 8 hours per week on a regular basis and more as needed to meet deadlines.

10. Please provide any other information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of this Task Force.

In my professional career I have been involved with the decision making process for school construction projects and have had the ability to see how material and systems selection at the beginning of a projects affect the performance and cost through the life of a facility. The recent results from the Alaska Housing Finance Corporations energy audits from around the state highlighted energy cost issues on schools and other public buildings across the state. I was involved with the design of some of the projects audited and able to relate the drivers of the decision making process to the results years later.

Kathleen G. Todd

Businessperson

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835-4200 Home, 831-0787 Cell

1. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

I would like to do what I can to insure adequate and equitable funding for education of each Alaskan child, now and into the future.

2. What strengths and/or skills would you bring to the task force?

I have knowledge of the funding structure, monetary needs of districts, insurance costs, contract negotiations, and other facets of funding public education from my many years on the Valdez School Board. On the other hand, I run a private business (a 4 doctor family practice) that is severely constrained as to costs and charges and am generally known as someone who hates waste, tries to get the best deal possible, and tends to make do with what's on hand.

3. Have you been a member of another task force before? If the answer is yes, please provide additional information.

No

4. What's your view about the public education system in Alaska?

In general, public schools in Alaska do a good job under some amazing challenges having to do with a remote and scattered population and some unique cultural backgrounds.

5. In your view, are Alaskan public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

Public schools are not adequately funded. I come to that conclusion by seeing comparisons with funding in other states (where costs are much less) and by dealing with a yearly school budget in Valdez, a relatively wealthy district that struggles to pay the bills without severely compromising education.

6. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?

Solving most or all financial problems for Alaskan schools is probably not possible (nor would I like schools to think they had carte blanche for spending). That said, I think that funding provided through the BSA is quite often preferable to specific grants because 1) it takes into account the costs throughout the state (through the district cost factor and school size adjustments, for instance), making it more fair, 2) it allows districts to use their collective brains to allocate funds by budgeting by need instead of by grant, and 3) it avoids wasting expensive administrative time at both the state and local level keeping track of multiple small piles of money. For instance, a grant for libraries serves a good cause, but may not be fair to all students in terms of giving them access to good reading material, may push a district with a relatively good library into buying more books when what they really need is a reading teacher, and requires employee time in the districts and the state office to administer.

7. What, in your opinion, is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?

1. a mix of state and local funding-state because that's where the money is and because that insures equalized opportunity and local to get local buy in and accountability
2. mostly through the BSA –see # 6.
3. in a predictable fashion, so that local budgeters can plan how to cut when necessary or how to spend to manage programs productively over the long haul. Ideally, districts would know their state and local funding before they start to budget, e.g. they would know by fall 2013 what funding levels would be for the 2014-2015 school year.

8. What are some ideas, if any, that you think could improve public education in Alaska in general?

High expectations for offerings for all students, including much more than standardized testing. Coordination with non-school entities to economically enhance education (e.g. internships, dual credit college classes, trained volunteer reading or math tutors). Full and effective use of internet resources. And of course, adequate funding!

9. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for their time and work. If appointed, how much time would you be able to devote?

I would expect to devote up to 2 weeks total time, in appropriate increments, involved in face to face meetings, telephonic meetings, individual or small group tasks , etc.

10. Please provide any other information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of this Task Force.

More specifics of my experiences:

1. 33 years in private practice in Valdez, Alaska. Owner of the practice and managing partner since 1987. Currently 2 physician and 16 non-physician employees, 2 partners.
2. Involvement in budgeting and other board matters for low budget but effective nonprofit organizations, such as Epiphany Lutheran Church, Valdez Arts Council, Girl Scout Troop 757, Valdez Synchro Seals swim team, Advocates for Victims of Violence,
3. Board member of self-insured medical plan for Alaska State Medical Association during start up and for several years thereafter.
4. 4 term member of the Valdez School Board. Negotiation team member 3 times for teacher contracts.

Donna Westdahl

Educator

Email: donna.westdahl@nsbsd.org

(907) 852-5311

1. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

The reason why I would like to be appointed to this task force is because the education of our children is very important to me. I truly believe in their potential to achieve and be successful even beyond what is expected of them by the district, the state, and the nation. Not only do family and community play an important part in their education, but the funding and how it is allocated or used effectively and efficiently definitely play a huge role. With the declining oil revenues, I am concerned about the direction and future of our state, especially in the area of our children's education.

2. What strengths and/or skills would you bring to the task force?

The strengths and skills that I could bring to the task is that I have been involved professionally, since 1992, as a teacher, Northwest Arctic Borough School District regional school board member, and a member of the Alaska Association of School Boards. I've also worked at the Chukchi Campus as a Village Access Coordinator, helping current and new students with their higher education in the Student Services. Currently, I am an elementary teacher at the Fred Ipalook Elementary at Barrow, Alaska.

3. Have you been a member of another task force before? If the answer is yes, please provide additional information.

No, I have not been involved in a task force before.

4. What's your view about the public education system in Alaska?

As a teacher, I know that I've made a difference in the lives of students throughout my career. I've seen children succeed with the love and support of their immediate and extended family. I've observed communities and organizations help and try to help our children in the betterment of their education. Even though I've seen these 'successes' thus far, I still see that our public education system of Alaska is still 'hanging in the balance.' Some of the keys in our children's successes were mentioned above, but what I also see as a key in ensuring a better future for our children is adequate funding. For years I've observed that the economically disadvantaged, the Alaskan Natives, and special needs students continue to fall short when it comes to various types of assessments ~ even when compared with other students within the state. The attendance and graduation rates of our students also are in need of improvement. The teacher turnover rate sometimes fluctuates in the different school districts throughout our state, and maintaining good teachers sometimes have been challenging. For years, rural teacher turnover rate has been higher than the urban teacher turnover rate. Recruitment, preparation, and retaining teachers are topics in which there is room for improvement. One of the most important aspects of our children's education, I believe, is how relevant and culturally responsive is the curriculum and instruction. And as a teacher at the elementary level, for years I've observed how irrelevant these have been. Even though I've mentioned where I see there is need for improvement, I appreciate the fact that the House of Representatives is putting together a task force to look more closely at examining the effectiveness and efficiency of our public education.

5. In your view, are Alaskan public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

I do not think that the Alaskan public schools are adequately funded. As a regular classroom teacher, I've seen overcrowded classrooms, especially at the early learning and Kindergarten levels. And in my observation, I've seen how challenging it was for those who've 'fallen through the cracks' at this level. As a regular classroom teacher, I have had to work without an aide ~ who would have been very helpful towards those students who might have 'felt lost' in the classroom, and the aide would be another who would have helped make a connection to the student, helping ensure he/she has a good education. As a regular classroom teacher, I have also observed how different programs, like the music program being cut due to funding. Music education and a student's participation in a music program is very beneficial to his/her learning.

As a regular classroom teacher, I've had to teach other subject areas, such as Physical Education, because there was no funding for a PE teacher. As a regular classroom teacher, I've observed the need for afterschool tutor programs, reading specialists, and counselors ~ but were not there due to lack of funds. As stated earlier, the relevancy of the child's curriculum and instruction is very important in their learning, but the bilingual department was less effective due to lack of funding. Our bilingual programs have at times been the only program and instruction that was culturally responsive and relevant. On a positive note, even though I've observed how inadequate funding has been, I've seen how different entities have come together for the betterment of our children's education. For instance, in the NANA Region, I've observed how the NWABSD, the NWAB, Chukchi Campus, and non-profit corporations have provided funding for some of the children's education, especially at the high school level. Students have been able to take online courses and regular campus courses with the help of these entities ~ because there were no instruction provided for those particular classes, and the students had to look elsewhere other than the public education arena. These are just some of the observations I've made throughout the years as a teacher/leader in regards to the funds and the lack thereof.

6. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?

I think increasing funding will solve some of the financial problems for public schools in Alaska. With the cost of inflation that has risen and is still rising, especially in regards to energy, the districts have had to 'do more with less.' This 2012-2013 school year is the third year in which the Base Student Allocation has been flat funded. When it comes to determining what monies go where, or how it is used, I think it is important to analyze, determine, calculate, and evaluate how these monies are used effectively and efficiently. I don't think its 'one' solution to the problem we are facing, in wise leadership and not just one adviser, there is 'safety.'

7. What, in your opinion, is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?

It seems that the way the funding of our public education is today shows disparateness, or inequality. Some school districts receive 'full funding equal to basic need in the form of State aid plus 90% of federal impact aid,' and some do not. Some districts have no taxes, and some do use taxes. The question of the purpose of the required local contribution should also be looked at more closely. The question of some boroughs being deprived of resources should also be looked at more closely. As stated earlier, the issue of monies should be analyzed and assessed of its

efficiency and effectiveness. It is the state's obligation to "establish and maintain a system of public schools." As a board of director member with the NWABSD, I've had to lobby to 'get funding' for certain items. And at times, I had wondered why that was so, because the children are our future of our state. It seems more questions come to mind rather than what is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska when I think about this issue.

8. What are some ideas, if any, that you think could improve public education in Alaska in general?

Parents are the children's first teachers, so developing good parenting skills is very important. This would include the parent/community 'owning' their child's education. Funding preschool is also important to the child's education, the early learning years plays a huge role in their lives. Recruiting and maintaining good teachers is another key to a child's success. Curriculum and instruction that is relevant to the child is also a key to the child's success. (We, the teachers at NSBSD, have been creating lessons relevant to the Inupiat of the North Slope using uBd, Jay McTighe.) Creating a safe environment for the child at school is also a key. Communication between the public education system and the community is also very important. There are various ways for improving our education in Alaska, but a key is also adequate funding.

9. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for their time and work. If appointed, how much time would you be able to devote?

I would like to devote as much of time as possible, but also recognize that I am an educator, too. I have not served on a task force before, but I am willing to learn and to put forth a good effort at it.

10. Please provide any other information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of this Task Force.

Kathleen Yarr

Educator

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907- 617-5481

1. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

I want to be appointed to this task force because I am a public school teacher. I taught in Metlakatla and now in Ketchikan. I am concerned about

A. The 45% dropout rate of Native students in Ketchikan and the high dropout rate of Native students statewide.

B. The inability we have to raise our reading and math scores. The scores for 17-year-old students on standardized tests has remained the same since the 1970's when I was in high school!

2. What strengths and/or skills would you bring to the task force?

I bring the following strengths to the task force:

A. I have a bachelor's in secondary education.

B. I have been involved in education in Alaska at the public, private and university level since 1984.

C. I have worked for the Ketchikan Indian Community (KIC), a federally-recognized tribe, off and on since 1987. I currently teach in their Tribal Scholars' Program. Our long-term goal is to form a charter school.

D. My teaching practicum was at Eastside Catholic High School. My three children all graduated from Holy Name Catholic School, so I have a private school perspective as well. Additionally, during their time at Holy Name, I my children were dually enrolled in PACE, a public charter school out of Craig because every child has the right to a public education.

3. Have you been a member of another task force before? If the answer is yes, please provide additional information.

I have been a member of a task force while serving on the Faith-Based Community Initiatives Advisory Council. Governor Murkowski appointed me. I last spoke to him about education issues this month.

4. What's your view about the public education system in Alaska?

Public education in Alaska could be more engaging both technologically and in the natural world. We live in a beautiful, fascinating state. We need to get out of the classroom and experience it doing real work for businesses and agencies. Students must experience education's practical application.

5. In your view, are Alaskan public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

Public schools are adequately funded.

6. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?

Increasing Base Student Allocation will solve some financial problems in Alaska, but we need to do it with resource development, i.e. timber, mining, wind, solar, tide, hydro, etc.

7. What, in your opinion, is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?

The best way to fund public schools in Alaska is to access our natural renewable resources, and to create jobs that employ people with a living wage. Not just seasonal tourism jobs.

8. What are some ideas, if any, that you think could improve public education in Alaska in general?

Public education in Alaska would improve if it had to compete with private education through educational choice. Private schools have been doing more with less since the Catholic Church created education for the masses. We all pay taxes. We should have the option of dedicating our tax dollars to the school of our choice. Right now private school parents pay twice for education.

Also, I think more regional hub schools such as Mt. Edgecumbe are good educational choices for some students from villages. Because my children compete in sports and clubs, we often house students from Mt. Edgecumbe. In fact we prefer to house them, and ask for them because they have lived such interesting lives and have made difficult choices early about their own futures.

9. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for their time and work. If appointed, how much time would you be able to devote?

If appointed, I would serve 10 - 15 hours a month.

10. Please provide any other information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of this Task Force.

In addition to being a stakeholder in education on the above sundry levels, I have also been the Director of Social Services for KIC, and have seen the consequences of poverty often brought about by lack of education (dropping out) and lack of educational choice (no way to escape failing schools). Consequences that include substance abuse and addiction, incarceration, losing their children to state's custody, unemployment, homelessness, teen pregnancies, suicide, and more social ills, all of which cannot be blamed on poor education, as much as the lack of choice, including educational choices.

Thank you for considering my application. I have strong feelings about this subject, but I also am eager to learn what others know. I can change my mind with more information.

Zan Zoske

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907 677-8146

1. Why do you want to be appointed to this task force?

I am an educator in the Anchorage School District and am interested in joining the Sustainable Education Task Force. I am very concerned about education in the State of Alaska and worry that we may follow other states in decisions that are not best for children.

2. What strengths and/or skills would you bring to the task force?

I have been a teacher for 20 years in education. I have 90+ continuing education credits, and have taken many extra trainings and feel that I know what works for schools. I have attended the Response to Intervention conference the last two years. As well as being up to date on my education background, I work well in groups, keeping the team focused on the task at hand and moving forward in a timely manner.

3. Have you been a member of another task force before? If the answer is yes, please provide additional information.

While I have not been on a task force at the state level I have worked on many committees through our community as well as schools.

4. What's your view about the public education system in Alaska?

Public education in Alaska is a huge undertaking. With so much diversity, there is not a one size fits all approach that will work.

5. In your view, are Alaskan public schools adequately or not adequately funded? Please explain your answer.

I feel that while the state funds education, we need to look at what districts need and make education a priority. Funding needs to go to the core of education and not allocated for new school stores or laptops when staff is being cut that will compromise students' education.

6. Do you believe that increasing funding for the Base Student Allocation will solve most or all financial problems for public schools in Alaska?

I don't know enough about Base Student Allocation solving the financial problems for public schools in Alaska but as I mentioned earlier, is it fair to put the same price on an education in the bush as in Anchorage? Funding for public schools is the public's business, taxpayers need to remember that is how they were educated and that that is the way it works. (At least for now.)

7. What, in your opinion, is the best way to fund public schools in Alaska?

8. What are some ideas, if any, that you think could improve public education in Alaska in general?

Public Education in Alaska can be improved by involving families, starting young and keeping quality teachers in state.

9. Appointed public members are volunteers and should not expect remuneration for their time and work. If appointed, how much time would you be able to devote?

I spend many hours a month volunteering, it is hard to put a number on what I could devote-it would depend mainly on if I would have to miss school and how leave could be arranged.

10. Please provide any other information that you think might be useful in determining your qualifications as a member of this Task Force.

I think that this task force is a great idea-educators, business persons and the Native community coming together to see what will work best for Alaska and its children. Please consider me for this committee.

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