

Superintendent's Report

To: Unalaska City School District Board of Education

From: Darrell J. Sanborn, Superintendent

Date: April 26, 2001

One of my most often used comments with my colleagues is "We have life good here in Unalaska!" Someone had asked me about the support that we received after the Budget Presentation to the City Council a few weeks ago. I babbled on about the community and parental support that I see at the school which I see as unique and unbelievable. He wanted to focus on the financial support. I do very much appreciate the financial support that the City affords us, but our success as a school district comes from as much of the parental and community support as it does from the financial support. We are able to do as well as we do as these support systems go hand in hand. It is my understanding that at a recent Senate Finance Committee meeting that Senator Taylor made some comment that the communities of the Slope, Valdez, Skagway and Unalaska needed to get their priorities in line concerning education. I did make contact with Senator Wilken who had said that it might have been said. I insist that Senator Taylor needs to think before he talks and also before he drafts and proposes such legislation as SB 94 and SB 174. He could have learned something from my Grandfather.

I am most appreciative of the entire budget process, and it wasn't as bad as I had heard. I was most impressed with the different folks' attitudes, questions and comments. It is my understanding that the City's final budget will be completed by May 8th. I remain very optimistic that the District will receive the total funds as recommended by the Budget Committee. Many folks have worked very hard to make Unalaska/ Dutch Harbor a great place to raise kids. I had said this when I had first visited this community, and I still believe that many folks have and continue to do this. I am so impressed with the City Council and their statesmanship attitudes. I only wish that the folks down in Juneau could come here to take some lessons. However, leave Taylor down there, even if he is a Republican.

This is normally the time of the year that I get on my soapbox concerning extended day and extended year educational opportunities to remind parents about the need to remain active in their child's education. It has been my experience that springtime Parent/Teacher conferences are not attended well. I was pleased to see that again, I was wrong. Many classes had reported 100% participation and the junior high and high school were exceptionally well attended. I had worried that all of our good news through the year would make students and parents complacent but appears that it has had the opposite effect even with the great communication that goes on between the faculty and the parents on a regular basis. Our summer school plans should be formalized in the very near future.

We have written grants for grades 8 to 11 in reading, and will ask this evening for a budget revision for our general fund to accommodate an additional .5 teacher. We need at least ten students in each of these three classes to meet the requirements of the grant.

Also Alyeska Correspondence School is offering two free classes to students for this summer. I would like to have a teacher available for support for these students as this increases their opportunities for class selection. This support can either be for students to stop in at a certain time of the day as they need help or on a very regular basis to keep on pace to meet the requirements. This is a great opportunity for students to pick up credits that they may need to graduate with their peers. We are in the process of writing a grant for summer pre-school also. As we finalize plans for summer school, I would hope that parents consider the recommendation that may come from teachers for their child's participation. Priorities will be given to those students needing to bring their skills up to standards in reading, writing and math. I know that many families leave during the summer for vacation and medical needs, but I would encourage parents to enroll their child needing assistance for as long as they can. They need not attend the full five or six weeks, unless the students are eighth graders or higher and they want credit for the course. Teachers may also put together some appropriate materials if they have other summer plans. As these plans come together we will get the word out.

You may see some different arrangements next year with our upper elementary class structure. As we move through this awkward size of the numbers of students in grades 3, 4, 5 & 6, we will need to respond to our students' needs and the expertise of our faculty. I would expect that we would see a combination of different grades and possibly some reassignment of our present staff to accommodate the needs of these students. This awkward size is where there is not quite enough students for two teachers, but the numbers are getting up there to have an impact on the educational program. It will also take into consideration for the next few years with what we will do with program to serve grades 5-8 after this next year. We will be looking at some different ways to best serve these students maximizing the talents of our faculty.

We have had some incidents over the past month or so dealing with student behavior on trips. As I have mentioned to students, parents, faculty and others, I do hope that when students and staff are representing Unalaska City School District at different events that they be excellent ambassadors of this District. In saying this, we should also remember that even though our students are doing fantastic academically, they are still children. We as educators, and parents should hope that our students be given an opportunity to learn from what they do positively, and also their mistakes and consequences for these mistakes. As adults, we also learn from our mistakes and the consequences. I know from personal experience that the most difficult thing that a parent has to do is to watch their child fall. Parenting is still the toughest job in the world, as we always want what is best for our children, and it has to be better than we ever had. The whole concept of discipline is difficult for students and for schools. While attempting to be consistent with all, we hope that all involved will learn something. With not only those accused being affected, but also those others that are participating in the different activities. These activities and individuals may also be affected either by the loss of a team member or group or the group's reputation. These are no winners in these cases.

Students are telling me that there are not many Mondays left of school. Before we know it, we will all be talking about the opening of school this next fall. With this nice weather that we have had, I do hope that students continue to remain focused on their academics. We do have a number of students, including seniors that are on the border of passing their classes.

Also a quick note: a special thanks to the folks at Public Works for the nice new bright traffic signs around our building concerning student safety. These should be helpful, especially in our dark times when the lighting is poor. We appreciate it bunches!!

Some important dates coming up, first of all, May 4th is Bus Driver Appreciation Day and May 6th to 12th is Teacher Appreciation Week. Don't forget the Children's Theater on Saturday starting at three and seven, along with the Career Fair scheduled for May 4th. I would encourage all to participate in these activities.

Thanks much!!