

Superintendent's Report

To: Unalaska City School District Board of Education

From: Darrell J. Sanborn, Superintendent

Date: March 15, 2000

Another real busy month has come and gone. This year has been just zooming by!!! We all survived our big testing week. I was pleased with how hard our students worked. Word is that some students spent over seven hours on the Math test! For the CAT-V and Benchmarks, we had very few make-ups. We should have the CAT-V results back within a month or so, and DOE has reported that the Benchmark and Exit Exam results are scheduled to be back the first week of May. We had a number of students, who were not sophomores as per our definition, (five or more credits at the beginning of the year), participate in the testing. We have some students with some extenuating circumstances, who were allowed to start their first of eleven attempts to successfully complete the exit exam. We encouraged all students not to attempt to second-guess the legislative process of the testing requirements, but to control their own destiny and count on their own abilities.

We have also survived that terrible disease that comes at this time of year, "Cabin Fever." When I lived on the Slope, we wondered if we would ever see spring again! Spring Break will be happening this next week and I am sure there are many students and staff who are looking forward to this. We will be surprised how fast the rest of the year goes. I do hope that our seniors remain focused on the task on hand, as we do have a few who will need to be careful where they put their priorities. We will also be looking at making some suggestion about what we can do for summer school for our students. I would like to bring this to you in May. Also in May, we will be bringing our Language Arts, (Reading and Writing), and Math Curriculums to you, along with resources. Again, I am very appreciative to the Faculty and community members that have made this task possible.

Tonight will be the first of the two public comment periods for our FY 02 Budget. I am pleased with the time and effort the Budget Committee and Holly have put into their work. This is truly a public process, much more than I have seen before. The intent of this budget is to maximize the City's contribution over the cap and to remain in compliance with the State, asking for these funds in trade, if you will, for utilities and maintenance costs for Community uses of school facilities. I think that in the future, we will be one of those school districts who will be scrutinized for our funding practices. If we were in the Southeast or another community in the State, we would probably not undergo the same scrutiny as other fortunate communities like the Slope and Valdez.

I would also like to suggest at this time that we put on hold all of our requests for CIP projects from the City, with the exception of replacing/repairing our parking lot out front. After a thorough review of the FF&E initial proposal from the architect, I am not pleased with the amount of unknowns left for the district to purchase. It has been my experience that the vast majority of items to open a new building are included as a package deal. In recent communications with the Architects this does not appear to be the case. There are many things that are being called "UCSD direct purchases". These items include the telephone system, technology, maintenance and custodial equipment, audio-visual equipment, and "supplies." These supplies are for library, classroom, custodial, and such.

Rather than try to be very protective of our undesignated fund balance of \$374,000 it would be much more financially responsible to make arrangements with the City Council to develop a plan over the next six months or so, to spend the remaining fund balance on the new school, as well as any unused funds from this year, putting our reserves on the table with the exception of \$100,000. This way, all would know the what, where and why.

I would suggest that we attempt to maintain this fund balance at approximately \$100,000 for each year, to cover unanticipated expenses. I feel as though it would be fiscally irresponsible not to do so. This year our insurance costs unexpectedly went up approximately \$60,000 due to a large number of claims in our insurance pool. We also have worked very hard to develop our curriculum in a manner that is appropriate for the needs of our students, and need to purchase the resources that go with these curriculums. Hopefully by giving the City Council a brief overview of our needs, and the availability of funding, and by being real upfront about not wishing to fund any positions out of the reserves, the remaining funds can be used for these unexpected expenditures.

The requests of the City that I would suggest that we put on hold at this time include the purchase of copiers, the "food mobile," and the technology request. I would still like to see the City and the District continue to look at things that we can do together. I was most pleased with Public Works commitment to assist us in our snow removal and mowing the soccer field. This eliminates major equipment purchases and the expertise to run this larger equipment. With their large equipment and their expertise, the City is able to do a large amount of work in a short amount of time, leaving us to do the "small stuff." I would also hope that they continue to look for a vehicle that they may have in their fleet to transfer prepared food to the new school, as we will be utilizing this not much more than a mile or two per day. There may be some vehicle that they are planning to surplus out over the next year or so and it would be much more prudent to update a vehicle now for us. Again, the idea is that these funds all come from the City, and we need to work together with this in mind as part of the big picture.

The technology piece may be something that we can move on a bit more quickly than some of the others. We have started a request for volunteers to serve on our technology committee to look at what we would need with our present situation, and in the new school utilizing local expertise. I do believe that over the next few months, we can put together a package with all of these projects with actual costs, run these through the Board, involving those other individuals in the process as they would like to make practical suggestions with as much information as possible. I feel as though the City may also see this as the appropriate manner to handle things, again, being real upfront with the Council.

In saying this, I have been known to be a risk-taker. Tonight we will also hear a preliminary report concerning our Accreditation. I have been on these teams in the past, where we did not want to address the faculty unless there was a plane on the ground waiting and running. They had discussions with the Faculty & staff this afternoon, and are prepared to discuss their preliminary findings and recommendations with you this evening. The Unalaska City School District and the Community have done an excellent job with educating our students. We are in the enviable position of not having to defend past practices and poor test scores. The Faculty, Staff, Community, Parents and others should be proud of their work. Our students are fantastic, and they have worked very hard to deserve their academic reputation. In comparing our school with other competitive situations, I like to add up the percentages of students passing each of the parts of the Exit or Competency Exam. I thought our score was 212, but after checking the website, I see that it has risen to 222.10. Other communities and schools are envious of our student and community's success. My hats off to all!!!

As the folks down in Juneau do their work, we still need to be very observant and diligent about finding out the direction of the wind. I was most impressed with the positive reputation and individual legislator's knowledge of our community. By the City inviting these various lawmakers to our community, they operate with first hand information. We are very thankful for the amount of work that the City and others do to promote our community in such a positive manner!

In the event that you missed the Open House this morning, you will see lots of Leprechaun Traps around the Library. I understand from the children that there has been a Leprechaun that has been creating messes in their classroom and the lockers. Please take a look around to see the creative contraptions that the children, and I am sure their parents, have built.