

# Superintendent's Report

**To:** Unalaska City School District Board of Education

**From:** Darrell J. Sanborn, Superintendent

**Date:** September 20, 2001

The academic year is up and running as we are completing our fourth week. I commend the Faculty, Staff, and especially the students. I am pleased how the students have gotten into the "groove" and have taken their job of learning very seriously. Necessary adjustments were made in some classes, and the students have adapted very quickly. I am pleased to see the faculty implementing our new curriculum in Reading, Writing and Math, and utilizing the new resource materials. Educational institutions have the opportunity to operate in an orderly fashion, and, I think we are "running on all eight cylinders." We be focused!!!

Our enrollment continues to inch upward as we normally do at this time of the year. On Monday, we had eight new students register, and we will continue to see students come and go. Today we are at 367.25, (we lost three this morning) and as last year, we are seeing the increases coming in the elementary classrooms. Our budget for this fiscal year was built on 355 students. Please remember that the Quality Schools Initiative penalizes districts when their enrollment drops or increases to a certain point where students are funded at sixty percent rather than one hundred percent. I do see this increase in enrollment helping us cover the additional \$97,000 we expect for medical coverage for our employees, but I don't believe the enrollment increases will cover it all.

In two weeks, our students will again participate in the Exit Examination. These tests will be administered to those students who had previously taken, yet were not successful in a previous attempt, and students who are new to the State, and are of junior and senior standing. Mr. Conwell will be sharing details for our Academic Boot Camp. DOE has not come out with a decision on how these test results will be reflected on students' transcripts and diplomas as per SB 133.

The new school is progressing nicely and much detail work is getting completed. Travel limitations have also affected this project, as many specialty folks are later than expected. I would like to take this opportunity to again thank the City Council and the community for their financial support and the additional funds they provided to complete our Furniture, Fixture, Equipment, & Finishing Touches. We are starting to order a number of items with the plan for these to arrive after November 15<sup>th</sup>. I will be putting out a letter to various businesses, entities and groups to ask for assistance with our move to the new school. It appears we need to do this sometime after Thanksgiving and prior to the Winter Holiday season, as the fishing industry will be extremely busy after the first of the year.

We are looking for ways we can improve participation at our annual "Welcome Back to School" night. Teachers worked hard to prepare, and a lot of great information for parents was available, but sadly, our turnout was not very high. I hope folks remember one of the strengths we are known for is our open and strong communication, but communication goes two ways. I really do appreciate those who did make it, and I believe many parents probably stop in on a regular basis and do not see the need for a "special" event to visit the teachers. Maybe this is a sign parents are utilizing the website, email, and phone system to communicate, and there is already very good one on one communication with teachers. It would be interesting to ask teachers how many parents utilize these tools, and if utilization is low, promote a class on how to access these great resources at "Back to School" night or every quarter after reports go home, and interest is higher. This also may be a reflection that our transitory rate has dropped, and parents already know the teachers. I have found that sometimes when districts are running smoothly and quietly, folks do not see the need to keep moving forward. The best remedy for discontent or apathy is to have a goal that challenges us to our greater potential. The education of our students provides an opportunity to stretch beyond "good," or even our present "best" and redefine or refine what a great education for the children of this district looks like. I am excited about working with folks involved in our Strategic Planning Process. This is a great opportunity to make improvement continue to happen. Let's take advantage of these "quiet" times to plan and create, and push this excellent educational program forward.

Unalaska is no different than any other community in the United States. The tragic events of September 11<sup>th</sup> have touched all of our lives and life has changed for all of us. I was happy to hear from many students that they were either reading more or watching movies, as they were not wanting to watch the news on the television. Many adults and children are still processing the events of this day. We want to do everything that we can in assisting students and families and do not want to do anything that may bring fear or concern to our constituents.

Principals are required by State Regulations to conduct monthly "emergency drills", or better known as fire drills. I have instructed Mr. Conwell and Mr. Probst to announce these drills the day prior to the planned event and also send notices home for parents with the children concerning the date and the time. As per state statute, these are "weather permitting." Our goal is not to alarm the children or parents, but only to instruct and train students.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Unalaska/Dutch Harbor Convention & Visitors Bureau and all the folks who helped in the Halibut Derby. They raised more than \$12,000 for scholarships for our students.

On a lighter note, I am looking forward to putting my baking skills on the line at Unalaska Pride's Special Blueberry Bash to be held on September 30<sup>th</sup>. I should be able to really find out if my baking is really that good, or the ladies in the office are just hungry in the mornings!!☺ I am hoping to enter at least four events, and I look forward to the competition!! (And a little help from Annabelle!)