

Superintendent's Report

To: Unalaska City School District Board of Education

From: Darrell J. Sanborn, Superintendent

Date: April 24, 2003

Spring appears to be here, as we can see the end of the school year in sight. However this is the time of year, which we must remain focused on the duties at hand. We all need to finish up strong with our educational goals. Many times we will see some students coasting and many find themselves in some difficulties with their classes. We also need to remain focused on the activities in Juneau. With less than a month to go in this Legislative Session, things have a tendency to start moving very quickly. At times, the rumblings are sounding somewhat gloomy and not so good but there are times where I see reasons to be optimistic, hoping for more than status quo with educational funding.

The standardized test scores for grades 2, 4, 5, 7, & 9 (Terra Nova CAT VI) have arrived and have been mailed out. I encourage parents to review these carefully and ask teachers if they have any questions or concerns. If your child has been recommended for summer school, I encourage you to give this serious consideration before turning this offer down. Remediation efforts are so very important given the high stakes testing. As soon as we receive the Benchmarks (grades 3, 6, & 8) and the Exit Exam scores, we will get the results in a quick fashion also.

Lately, I have heard much about the 2003-2006 Negotiated Agreement and Administrative and Classified raises or salary increases. I wanted to take this opportunity to respond to a few of the topics. I should start off by stating I believe much of this is coming from a very small and very vocal minority, as it is my understanding this Negotiated Agreement was ratified by an overwhelming majority of UEA. I believe both negotiating teams followed their prospective marching orders, as insurance was a very big issue. I heard from a UEA official after the negotiation process that during the duration of this negotiated agreement, I could not give any raises or salary increases to any administrators or classified staff. I should also state that I don't believe this is UEA's official stance on this issue. In short, this agreement did not freeze salaries; this agreement maintained the salary schedule, allowing for movement on the scale. There is a **big** difference. There are a number of faculty who have and or will cap out on their prospective column. There are a very small number of faculty who are at the top of the salary and educational placement on the scale. For those who are not capped, they will continue to move on their prospective salary scale. We also will be discussing caps on administrative salaries this evening. Administrative raises are always very political as many times, some folks will attempt to make this so. I came up with the suggested percentage

salary increase on what the step increase would be for the average teacher salary at UCSD for FY 04, which is 3.18% salary increase.

Unalaska City School District does not have a salary scale for those on an administrative contract. I believe we are much too small to initiate such. Those on administrative contracts are required to maintain their license. Most do not have tenure. All have additional education requirements. Some more misinformation which I have heard and I would like to address, is that I have found a “pot of money” to come up with this salary increase, which is not true. As we calculate the next fiscal year budget, we figure in step and salary increase for all certificated and classified staff. This is no different from administrative salaries which this year, as in the past two years, we calculated a 3.5% increase. However in stating this, we do not calculate any column movement for certified staff, as this is hard to predict.

My fear this evening is we may need to answer the age-old question, is a step increase a raise or is it a salary increase. I am ready to do so. I should also state, the retention of our staff is good for our students, and as we go through the budget process, we know this costs money. I believe this particular group of teachers, and their longevity with the District is a big part of the reasons for the success of our students. We have very good teachers. However, I must say the District attracts very good teachers. Not many folks realize we have the third highest base or starting salary in the State for teachers with no experience. Our average teacher’s salary ranks fifth in the State. Our highest paid teacher salary ranks seventh in the State. I wished I could say this about our Administrator’s salaries, and I really wish we could say this about our Classified Staff. I don’t see our teachers as having “low morale” due to this Negotiated Agreement. Insurance is a valued commodity. But I should state, I believe for the next Contract, we will need to work hard to find funds to increase salaries in the event we fall in any of these categories. Again, I want to reiterate, I believe we are hearing from a very small and very vocal minority. I should also state we have fantastic teachers, and they are worth every bit of their salary and then some. The goal always has been and, will continue to be, to maintain and improve our educational program for our students.

Concerning the comments going around about “our district is in such poor financial shape,” I want to discuss this a bit. I have never said nor have I heard this at any meeting I have attended. I find this District to be very fiscally responsible. I very much believe that schools should not count on reserves to make the operating budget. I believe the Boards through the years have done an excellent job in guiding the District and it’s philosophy. There are superintendents and boards in school districts far, far away which have put an emphasis on doing the popular thing and spending down their reserves. As I tell principals, educational leadership is not often a popularity contest.

I also wanted to report a successful trip to the Job Fair, as we have filled all of our vacancies with quality folks. I appreciate local folks taking phone calls and answering questions of prospective teachers. It is still my hope to be able to restore the one faculty position we cut, after all the dust settles with the different possibilities and opportunities.

I wanted to end this evening with a great deal of gratitude and respect for our City Council. Throughout this past campaign season we heard from many of our elected officials that education was a number one priority, and most either talked about fully funding or additional monies for education. We have seen the discussions in Juneau, and heard the stuffs about one of the reasons for borough formation was for local communities needed to pay more for education. One Senator even stated that Unalaska did not pay anything for education. It should be noted that the District receives more educational dollars from the City than it does from the State. Thank you!!!!