

Superintendent's Report

To: Unalaska City School District Board of Education

From: Darrell J. Sanborn, Superintendent

Date: March 13, 2003

Before we begin the discussion concerning the FY 04 Budget, I wanted to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to parents and students alike with regards to the testing cycle last week. The attendance, the attitudes and the seriousness of both parents and students concerning the various tests given last week were just fantastic. Attendance was very high, with very few make-ups, and participation in the Exit Exam was almost perfect. I believe folks understand the importance of doing one's best on these tests and the results have a big, very big impact on one's educational program. For the class of 2004, students must pass the Exit Exam in order to receive a high school diploma.

The FY 04 budget will be discussed a great deal this month. One only had to listen to the Governor's "State of the Budget" of a week ago, to realize life in Alaska is about change drastically. Again, I believe we must really lobby for **FULL** funding of education and remind folks on both sides of the aisle and the Governor's staff that education was their number one priority for this legislative session. In my younger years, I remember the calls of various politicians stating to those of us in education must do "more with less" in our duty of educating students. This had gone on for a number of years, and I believe Unalaska City School District has done this through the years. I know over the past couple of years, a number of school districts across the State and the Nation have had to start doing "less with less." I do feel we are one of the more fortunate districts as we are still trying to do the "same with less" given the cuts we have made over the past couple of years. I would like to remind everyone that over the past couple of years we made the cuts needed in areas we felt would not directly affect students with minimal impact on our educational program. This has always been the goal in every school district. I worry, with the economy and world affairs the way they are, this may not be the end of the tight budgets and cuts. Last year, we eliminated the curriculum coordinator's position along with some other personnel cutbacks in administrative offices. Although this did have an impact on our curriculum development, I very much appreciate a number of faculty assisting in the challenge in completing the writing our standards-based curricula over this past year.

Concerning the "down-sizing" in our Aleut Language & Culture program, it is important to understand we are not cutting the program out completely as some folks believe. We are moving the certificated teacher from the Aleut program to a regular education program which certification is required in order

to teach. We will have a competent individual teaching the Aleut Language and Culture Curriculum. And yes, it would be more advantageous to continue to have a certificated teacher in this program. It would also be nice to have more certificated faculty to teach our students in all grade/subject areas.

I suspect we will hear some emotional public input concerning this proposed budget. I believe some folks may take this opportunity to vent on issues, which may not involve this District. This is a funding issue and this is an educational issue. In my view, this is not a personality issue; it is not a program evaluation issue, nor is it a political issue. The only issue is funding and how do we maintain what we have to the best of our ability and not totally cut any particular programs, utilizing our personnel and funding to the best possible use of our educational dollar. What is best for our students? Through recent years, educational institutions have seen their budgets get tighter and tighter and now most cuts come in personnel. This is due from years of cutting in those other areas to make ends meet. Unalaska City School District is no different and has 78% of its budget allocated to personnel costs. I hope to hear from folks some alternatives to any of our budget shortfall.

Should this budget and consequences be approved, please expect that I will be coming forward with a proposal to put forth a request of the Board for a Limited Certificate, Type M, classification for an employee. This classification must not only have Board approval but also meet a number of criteria areas as per State Regulation.

I am also happy to say I had a discussion with some local entities concerning possible grant funding with this position. Although this funding may have a systemic change in the method of delivering educational services, this funding has the potential to help others including our students. Since the reauthorization of IASA, and especially now with No Child Left Behind, grants for educational funding now are required to focus on academics. Other entities have much more flexibility and the ability to be more creative than educational institutions.

As we move through our budget hearings, I would encourage folks to continue to participate in the legislative process happening down in Juneau. Although I wish it were not true, I feel again we will be lucky to hold on to what we have but really should not expect a funding increase for the education of our students. This session is not scheduled to end until May 21st, so we must stay very active in our quest to protect the educational funding we now have. I still like to be a bit optimistic and would like to see additional funds put into all educational programs.