



Position Statement on SB 57 Charter School Funding

In 1995, AASB supported the creation of charter schools in statute. Over the years, school boards have subsidized and otherwise assisted local charter schools in providing Alaska families with a viable choice in public education.

AASB encourages the Legislature to amend AS 14.17.450 as outlined in SB 57 to establish a more equitable means of funding charter schools.

School boards find themselves caught between local citizen initiatives to create choices within public schools and an inadequate funding stream in statutes that require supplemental funding from local districts.



MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
501 N. GULKANA
PALMER, ALASKA 99645
Office of the School Board
(907) 746-9272 Fax (907) 761-4076

MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
RESOLUTION NO. 09-002

A RESOLUTION OF THE MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH SCHOOL BOARD IN SUPPORT OF
SENATE BILL NO. 57 "AN ACT RELATING TO CHARTER SCHOOL FUNDING."

WHEREAS, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School Board invites support of Senate Bill No. 57 "An Act Relating To Charter School Funding"; and

WHEREAS, charter schools give opportunities outside of the traditional public schools for innovative programs to be implemented; and

WHEREAS, charter schools gain momentum and interest from a broader larger audience as a program is developed in the initial year of operation; and

WHEREAS, charter schools like all schools have fluctuations in enrollment and losing program gravity because of a slight drop in enrollment below 150 students for one year could have a longer term detrimental impact on the school; and

WHEREAS, a school that is not recognized as a school site for funding purposes receives a reduced financial allocation; and

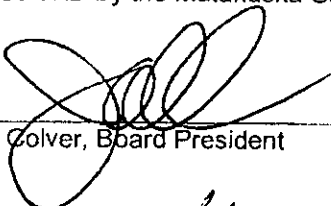
WHEREAS, being recognized as a school site gives economic relief by bringing a greater dollar amount to the school allowing for more comprehensive and adequate funding; and

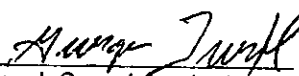
WHEREAS, this Bill offers the initial year of operation for a charter school as an opportunity to build community support and student numbers and ultimately strengthens the quality of the program and the potential for program and student accomplishment; and

WHEREAS, encouragement is offered to add language to this Bill to lower the enrollment for alternative school's recognition as a school site from 200 students to 175 as a measure to support an alternative school's need for a smaller learning community.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School Board supports Senate Bill No. 57 "An Act Relating to Charter School Funding."

ADOPTED by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School Board this 18th day of February, 2009.


Jim Colver, Board President


George Troxel, Superintendent

ATTEST:


Stacy Escobedo, Board Secretary



Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District

Robert Boyle, Superintendent

333 Schoenbar Road

Ketchikan, AK 99901

phone 907-247-2109; fax 907-225-3870

boyler@kgbsd.org

February 13, 2009

Senator Joe Thomas
1292 Sadler Way, Suite 313
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701

Dear Senator Thomas:

I am sending you a resolution by the Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District Board of Education in support of Senate Bill 57, an Act relating to charter school funding.

We believe charter schools are public schools that provide valuable education options to Alaska families in addition to encouraging parent and community involvement in our schools. The current funding system results in a significant decrease in funding for charter schools as compared to other neighborhood schools of their same size, should small changes in student enrollment take place.

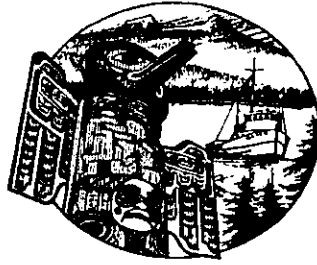
The Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District supports the passage of Senate Bill 57 in modifying the current school funding law as it applies to charter schools.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert Boyle".

Robert Boyle
Superintendent



**KETCHIKAN GATEWAY BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
RESOLUTION #09-04**

**A RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL NO. 57, WHICH IS AN ACT
RELATING TO CHARTER SCHOOL FUNDING**

WHEREAS, Senate Bill 57 will modify the current school funding law as it applies to charter schools with fewer than 150 students; and

WHEREAS, charter schools provide valuable education options to Alaska families and encourage parent and community involvement; and

WHEREAS, the current funding system results in a dramatic decrease in funding for charter schools as compared to neighborhood schools of their same size ; and

WHEREAS, adjusted student count as determined under AS 14.17.450 is the basis of state funding for all schools in Alaska; and

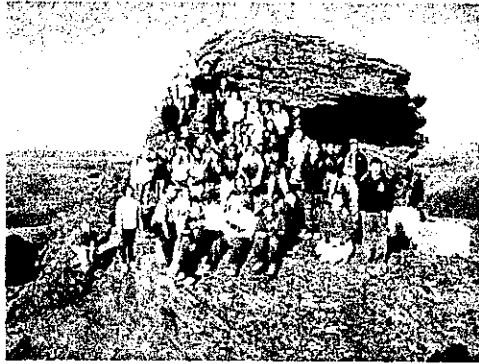
WHEREAS, Senate Bill 57 funds charter schools with fewer than 150 students to an adjusted student count by the same per-student rate as neighborhood schools with 400 students; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Board of Education of the Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District supports passage of Senate Bill 57.

Adopted by the Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District on this 11th day of February, 2009

Karen Eakes
Karen Eakes, Board President

Michael Fitzgerald
Michael Fitzgerald, Vice President



Anvil City Science Academy

Nome, Alaska

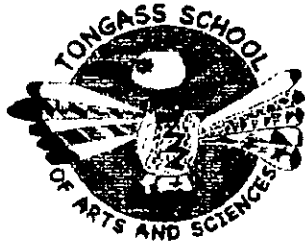
My name is Todd Hindman and I am the lead teacher at Anvil City Science Academy in Nome.

I am speaking in support of SB57 on behalf of Nome Public Schools' Board of Education and the Academic Policy Committee of Anvil City Science Academy.

In a small community such as Nome, a charter school with a student population of 150 is highly unlikely and if it were able to achieve that enrollment, it would most likely have an adverse effect on the other public schools.

The small size of ACSA is one of its strengths. It allows for flexibility in its daily operation to provide unique educational opportunities to its students. This allows students to easily get out in the community and environment to use it as a resource in their education, providing a more meaningful learning experience. Our small size also creates a culture around family values to ensure student success through daily engagement of parents.

Thank you for your efforts at providing support for small charter schools, which are identifying and meeting specific needs in the communities they serve.



TONGASS SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES RESOLUTION

Urging the Governor of Alaska and the Alaska State Legislature to pass Senate Bill 57, "An Act relating to charter school funding."

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE OF THE TONGASS SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES:

WHEREAS the Constitution of the State of Alaska and other laws and policies of the State require educational opportunities for all children; and
 WHEREAS Charter schools are public schools that provide valuable education options to Alaska families; and
 WHEREAS Charter schools increase learning opportunities and encourage parent and community involvement in our schools; and
 WHEREAS the current state funding system limits communities' ability to create and sustain these innovative programs; and
 WHEREAS current state law results in charter schools receiving 30% to 45% less state funding than neighborhood schools of their same size; and
 WHEREAS Senate Bill 57 funds charter schools with fewer than 150 students at a per-child rate closer to that of average, urban elementary schools; and
 WHEREAS Senate Bill 57 solves the funding problem in an equitable, fiscally responsible manner; and
 WHEREAS Senate Bill 57 will support our schools and districts as they carry out the legislature's intent in creating the charter school law;
 BE IT RESOLVED that the Tongass School of Arts and Sciences Academic Policy Committee supports the passage of Senate Bill 57; and
 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the Tongass School of Arts and Sciences Academic Policy Committee urges the Governor of Alaska and the Alaska State Legislature to pass Senate Bill 57, "An Act relating to charter school funding."
 COPIES of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Sara Palin, Governor of Alaska; the Honorable Gary Stevens, Senate President; the Honorable Mike Chenault, House Speaker; the Honorable Senators Hoffman and Stedman, Senate Finance Committee Co-Chairs; the Honorable Senators Ellis, Elton, Huggins, Olson, and Thomas, Senate Finance Committee Members; the Honorable Kyle Johansen, Representative, House District 1; and members of the Ketchikan Gateway Borough School Board.

Michelle Johnston

 President, Academic Policy Committee

February 10, 2009

 Date

Nancy Wagner, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Fairbanks North Star Borough School District
520 Fifth Avenue, Fairbanks, Alaska 99701
Ph-(907) 452-2000, ext. 401 Fax-(907) 451-0541

Thank you Chairman Seaton and members of the House Education Committee.

I am representing the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District and want to express our support for Senate Bill 57.

I would like to thank the House Education Committee for scheduling SB57. This Bill is extremely important to Charter schools which provide choice and alternative educational programs for our students.

We currently have three charter schools and a new one coming on-line next year. Two of our current charter schools and our new charter school have target enrollments at about 155 students, so struggling to meet the 150 funding threshold is not uncommon.

This year, one of our charter schools just missed the 150 student "average daily membership" threshold during the count period, even though they had over 150 students by the end of the count. Falling short of the current enrollment threshold cost our district about \$680k...All because of a small timing difference related to student enrollments.

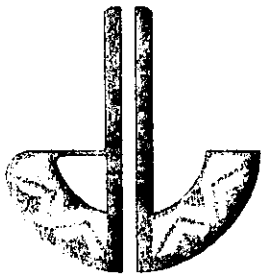
While we expect that all our existing charter schools will be larger than 150 students next year, this bill helps addresses the catastrophic impact should a school fail to meet that 150 student threshold, even if by the thinnest of margins. It is a fair compromise for funding of existing charter schools.

We also expect our new charter school to exceed 150 students next year. But this bill also provides a fair funding compromise should their startup enrollments fall a little short. It would still be difficult to offer the curriculum as originally envisioned, but it would not be impossible, as is currently the case. It provides a great incentive for schools to get to their targeted enrollments.

SB87 fixes the funding problem in an equitable, fiscally responsible manner.

I encourage you to pass this Bill. Providing alternative educational programs is important for the public school system. We are charged with the responsibility of meeting the needs of EVERY child enrolled in our district. Alternative and Charter Schools provide the opportunity for Alaska families to choose the program that best meets their child's needs. Without the provisions outlined in SB57, at least one of our charter schools could be in danger of having to close.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB57.



Doyon, Limited

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Fairbanks, Alaska 99701-2041
(907) 459-2000
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Norm Phillips, Jr.
President and CEO
E-mail: phillipsn@doyon.com
Direct Dial: (907) 459 2004
Fax: (907) 459 2060

March 25, 2009

Senator Joe Thomas
State Capitol, Room 510
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

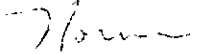

Dear Senator Thomas:

Thank you for introducing SB 57, this bill directly aligns with Doyon, Limited's mission statement, which includes promoting the economic and social well-being of our shareholders and future shareholders. The Effie Kokrine Charter School is important to the Alaska Native community in the interior. With almost 25% of our 17,500 shareholders residing in the Fairbanks community we believe that a culturally sensitive school is essential to the well-being of our shareholders.

Therefore, on behalf of our shareholders, Doyon, Limited supports SB 57.

Thank you again and please let me know if we can do anything else to help. I can be reached at (907) 459-2000 or by e-mail at phillipsn@doyon.com.

Sincerely,


Norman L. Phillips, Jr.
President and CEO

cc: Linda Evans, Principal, Effie Kokrine Charter School

From: Vickie Erickson [mitchvicky@gci.net]
Sent: Tuesday, February 24, 2009 9:46 AM
To: Sen. Lyman Hoffman; Sen. Bert Stedman; Sen. Johnny Ellis
Cc: Sen. Kim Elton; Sen. Charlie Huggins; Sen. Donny Olson; Sen. Joe Thomas
Subject: SB 57

Dear Senators,

I would like to thank all of you in your past support of for schools in Alaska, especially those that are small in numbers and therefore needing more support when it comes to funding issues. I am requesting your support for the passage of SB 57.

Charter Schools allow parents, community members, and teachers to be in charge of developing unique educational programs and to be involved in decision making for school policies. As a parent of three Charter School children and two more that will soon be in Charter schools, it means a lot to me to be involved in school policies and the operations of our school. Our educational process is very flexible, which provides for the needs of our children and parents alike.

The Anvil City Science Academy has been in operation for eleven years now, it was created by parents, teachers, and many community members who were interested in a family oriented school characterized by high academic standards and a well-rounded curriculum, with an emphasis in science and math. The Science Academy serves 5th through 8th grade students who come to the school with a wide variety of backgrounds, learning styles, experiences, and needs. We are able to address the individual differences and learning styles, and creativity we see an increase in learning and creativity for all students. Our students at this time are involved in a salmon habitat restoration project grant from the Department of the Interior, and are working with Charlie Lean of Norton Sound Economic Development Company, because of this project the Academy students were nominated and won the "Spirit of Youth" award in the category of Science. Another project that is noteworthy is the Artist in Schools project in which students are interviewing Nome residents in preparation for writing a play about the last 50 years in Nome.

Anvil City Science Academy has 44 students, with two and half certified teachers, no support personnel. This gives the school the needed flexibility to provide opportunities to the students to go beyond the traditional classroom walls in order to utilize community and environmental resources. In addition, in a small community such as Nome, a program like ACSA can't reach a student count of 150 students, without having an adverse affect on the other public schools in the district. Therefore, a smaller program like ACSA is beneficial to the community by providing an alternative education program, while minimizing the possible impact on other schools.

Respectfully submitted,

Vickie Erickson

From: Sen. Kim Elton
Sent: Thursday, January 29, 2009 7:45 AM
To: Dana Owen
Subject: FW: Support for SB 57

-----Original Message-----

From: Hubert Angaiak [mailto:hangaiak@gci.net]
Sent: Thursday, January 29, 2009 7:40 AM
To: Sen. Kim Elton; Sen. Bettye Davis; Sen. Charlie Huggins; Sen. Donny Olson; Sen. Gary Stevens
Subject: Support for SB 57

Honorable Senators,

I would like to thank you for your continued support in providing the best education for Alaska's children. I fully support SB 57 and I urge you to pass it. Charter Schools provides a positive alternative in education for our children. We are always looking for solutions in providing what's best in education for our children and Charter Schools are part of the solution.

Thank you.

kind regards,
Hubert Angaiak
Bethel, Alaska 99559
907-543-3074

From: payroll@ci.nome.ak.us on behalf of Dana Handeland [dhandeland@nomealaska.org]
Sent: Wednesday, January 28, 2009 8:29 AM
To: Sen. Donny Olson; Sen. Kim Elton; Sen. Bettye Davis; Sen. Charlie Huggins; Sen. Gary Stevens
Subject: supporter of SB 57

Donny,

I want to thank you and your fellow Senators for supporting Charter Schools in Alaska. We have actively worked for the past several years to provide a more permanent "fix" to the funding dilemma that we face due to the typical charter school enrollment and the current method of funding. We believe that great strides have been taken with SB 57.

Our school here in Nome has an enrollment of 44 which is capped due to space constraints at the current facility. We are paired with the largest school in our district causing concerns each year of whether we still can continue to provide the Nome community with optional educational opportunities. We have a proven program and a waiting list each year.

We work hand in hand with our district, many times providing a venue to try new methods that can later be implemented into the larger district. Providing a more equitable funding formula for charter schools only furthers the endless opportunities that our Alaskan education system can provide all Alaskan children especially in the future.

Thank you again for your continued support. The community of Nome appreciates this most important work for our children.

Dana Handeland
Anvil City Science Academy, APC member

From: Lisa Leeper [lleeper@nomeschools.com]
Sent: Sunday, February 22, 2009 9:02 PM
To: Sen. Joe Thomas
Subject: Support for SB 57

Dear Senator Thomas,

I teach at Anvil City Science Academy in Nome. I hope that you will consider the following points in order to help SB 57 pass this stage with the Finance Committee in order that it may be heard by all and voted upon.

Respectfully,
Lisa Leeper
Teacher, Anvil City Science Academy

- Charter schools are public schools that provide valuable education options to Alaska families.
- The existing school funding law results in charter schools that enroll fewer than 150 students receiving 30% to 45% less state funding than neighborhood schools of their same size.
- Inequitable funding limits communities' ability to create and sustain these schools.
- There is a dramatic decrease in funding (\$500,000 - \$700,000 loss) when a charter school's enrollment drops from 150 students to 149, which creates a financial crisis for both the school and its host district.
- Senate Bill 57 solves the funding problem in an equitable, fiscally responsible manner.
- SB 57 funds charter schools with fewer than 150 students at the same per-student rate as neighborhood schools with 400 students.
- SB 57 contains a one-year, hold-harmless provision for charter schools that are either in their first year of operation or had more than 150 students the previous year, reducing the financial damage to their district.
- SB 57 will allow school districts to carry out the intent of the legislature in creating the charter school law, by increasing quality education options available to Alaska families.
- SB 57 is supported by the Alaska Association of School Boards, and superintendents and parents of charter school students from across the state. The bill has been co-sponsored by Senators Thomas, Stevens, Elton, and Davis.

2/25/2009

From: Diane Cathcart [Diane_Cathcart@ci.juneau.ak.us]
Sent: Tuesday, January 27, 2009 2:53 PM
To: Sen. Kim Elton; Sen. Bettye Davis; Sen. Charlie Huggins; Sen. Donny Olson; Sen. Gary Stevens
Cc: Catherine Reardon
Subject: Support for SB57

Dear Senators and Staff,

Thank you for taking a moment out of your busy schedules to read this email.

I am writing to request your full support of SB57-An Act Relating to Charter School Funding.

As you are well aware; education is not a one size fits all. It is important for families to have a choice and different settings are a better fit for different children and their families. By creating more equitable funding it helps ensure small charter schools will continue to exist. Small Charter Schools are constantly trying to reach out to families with diverse needs for their children; whether it is a smaller overall school size so children don't feel "lost" in the crowd or children that have special learning needs. Small Charter Schools have the ability to help more children that are in danger of falling through the cracks, *if* they are properly funded. In my humble opinion this also helps relieve the stress larger schools may feel from trying to help children in need while maintaining the needs of the general school populous.

Full funding for ALL our children and schools should be every Alaskans priority; we owe it to our children and their future.

Thank you for your time and your service to our State.

Sincerely,

Diane Cathcart (Juneau Community Charter School 4/5/6 Class parent)
310 Irwin St Apt B
Juneau, AK 99801
907-523-2166

January 26, 2009

Dear Senator Elton, Senator Davis, Senator Olson, Senator Huggins and Senator Stevens; members of the Senate Education Committee:

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 57. It is a well written piece of legislation that would help small charter schools continue to serve students all across Alaska. These students' schools are in need of more equitable funding to support salaries and supplies. I am grateful you support charter schools as an option for parents to meet their child's needs.

I have three children in the Juneau School District public school system. I chose to enroll in the lottery when my eldest child was in the first grade. Luckily she got in the charter school and since the second grade it has been a wonderful educational and social environment for her and her siblings.

While I attended Arizona State University as a college student, I took almost every math class offered. I have always loved math and the sciences. The methods used to teach math at the charter school are rigorous, build solid understandings of number patterns and such strong flexibility in solving problems that I sincerely wished I had had the opportunity to be exposed to and to learn math in such a progressive, skill-building, visual way. It is exciting to see students experience this type of meaningful math.

I attended public school throughout my life and I loved school, however I believe my children are far more comfortable and intensely involved in their projects while also thoroughly enjoying attending school. They are being given an exceptional chance to become all they can. The projects that incorporate writing, research, art, social studies/science and teambuilding are solid methods of fun and learning. The parents of these students become involved as well and work hard to support this small charter school.

The Juneau Community Charter School is in need of financial support. Parents contribute by supporting teachers in the classroom, helping teachers prep for the week to come, we work around the school facility to build shelves, clean and make it work efficiently. Parents also work very hard to fundraise to meet the financial commitments it takes to run the charter school. It is sorely underfunded at present.

The charter school has been part of the Juneau School District, serving a wide array of students for over ten years. It sets high standards and builds leadership, competence and love of our environment in such a compassionate manner.

To be very honest, if it were not for the charter school, I know I would begin a small child-care business and home school my children.

It has been stated, from President Obama to our Governor's State of the State, that education is one of the top legislative priorities. I sincerely hope that funding small

charter schools, through creative use of resources, educate children in a way that many children need, to become successful is also a priority within your committee.

In Alaska, small charter schools are funded dramatically lower per student compared to district counterparts. This bill recognizes charter schools as important options and is an attempt to balance educational funding per student at a reasonable percentage.

Please continue your support and know that small charter schools are doing important works on behalf of students all across Alaska, in particular here in Juneau. Please know that besides the many, many parents and educators who believe in the success of small charter schools and its' students high achievement, test scores and critical thinking skills we have no lobbying force to help other Senators or House members understand this issue. Please I ask each of you to help by sharing your support for SB 57.

Thank you for your work on behalf of Senate Bill 57.

Sincerely,

Beth Rivest, wife of a hard-working, small business owner; loving and caring parent of three wonderful children; and a member of the Juneau Community.

Sen. Kim Elton

From: Linda Newman [newman@alaska.net]
Sent: Wednesday, January 28, 2009 12:35 AM
To: Sen. Bettye Davis; Sen. Charlie Huggins; Sen. Donny Olson; Sen. Gary Stevens
Cc: Catherine Reardon; Sen. Kim Elton
Subject: Fwd: Thank you for Senate Bill 57

Dear Members of the Senate Education Committee: My wife and I are forwarding a copy of this email that we sent to Senator Kim Elton earlier this week. We are sending this to you so that you can see how much we appreciate his co-sponsorship of Senate Bill 57, and so that you will know that we are grateful to you for considering this bill. Thank you for the support you've provided charter schools in the past; we hope you will support this effort to assist Alaska's small charter schools, which currently operate under an inequitable and unsustainable funding scheme. We look forward to the discussion about the bill at your Thursday meeting.

Sincerely,

Tony and Linda Newman
 newman@alaska.net

Begin forwarded message:

From: Linda Newman <newman@alaska.net>
Date: January 25, 2009 11:11:53 PM AKST
To: Senator_Kim_Elton@legis.state.ak.us
Subject: Thank you for Senate Bill 57

Senator Elton: Every year for the past several we've written to you to ask for your help in trying to fund Alaska's small charter schools, including Juneau's, in a more equitable way. We're extremely pleased and excited to be able to write to you tonight and thank you for taking leadership on this issue right away this session, by cosponsoring Senate Bill 57.

If this bill successfully makes it through the legislative process and passes into law this year it will provide relief to the Juneau Community Charter School just in the nick of time. We know that we've said in my prior letters to you that the situation is already urgent, but this year, for the first year in the seven years that we've been involved as parents of JCCS students, we are operating at a budget deficit and drawing down the school's savings. We probably have less than two years of funding left at the rate we're depleting the savings. The Charter School simply can't operate indefinitely on the unfair funding formula that leaves charter schools funded at a per-student rate that is significantly lower than other similar-sized schools in the district. We've all but resigned ourselves to the fact that our kids' school will likely need to close in a year or two because it will simply run out of money. (Believe us, we've exhausted ourselves trying to fundraise out of this mess.)

The importance of this bill for all of Juneau's kids is demonstrated by the fact that the Juneau School District has made more equitable small charter school funding one of its legislative priorities this year, and has resolved to support us in our efforts to correct the current funding inequity. We've just reviewed the bill and have exchanged a few emails with our fellow Charter School parents, and we are in agreement that the approach outlined

1/28/2009

through this bill may be the best one yet. This bill makes it possible for small schools to operate, but still maintains the legislature's intent to encourage the formation of larger schools.

In our prior-year emails and letters to you on this issue we've taken much time and space to tell you about our kids and how much they--our whole family--gain from our participation in Juneau's Charter School. All of those things remain true. Our kids are learning so much and so well, but best of all, the Charter School has become an important part of all our lives because of the community that's grown around it.

Let us know what you would like us to do to assist you in securing passage of this bill this year.

Sincerely,

Tony and Linda Newman
308 Distin Avenue
Juneau, AK 99801
586-2172
newman@alaska.net



To: Larry Johansen
Subject: RE: Charter school Bill

Larry--

Thanks. As chair of the education committee, I'm holding a committee hearing on the bill in a half hour and am co-sponsor of the bill.

Kim

From: Larry Johansen [mailto:rowdydog@gci.net]
Sent: Thursday, January 29, 2009 8:05 AM
To: Sen. Kim Elton
Subject: Charter school Bill

Senator Elton,

I quick word in support of the funding formula equalization bill. I am a charter school parent. We do school jobs to save our school money to make our program happen. My wife and I perform janitorial service and recess duty to save cost. Its not that we mind doing these jobs but we would like to be able to spend our volunteer efforts on jobs that would directle lead to improving oue children's educational experience. AS it is the Juneau charter school is an educational success meeting core standards and for all social classes. Please help us help our kids.

-Larry Johansen
3010 Foster
Juneau, AK

