



JUNEAU SCHOOL DISTRICT

CITY AND BOROUGH OF JUNEAU

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February 6, 2012

The Honorable Bert Stedman, Co-Chair
The Honorable Lyman Hoffman Co-Chair
Finance Committee, Alaska State Senate
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau Alaska 99811.1182

Dear Senator Hoffman and Senator Stedman:

Thank you for recognizing the importance of an increase to the Base Student Allocation and for hearing SB171 Increase BSA Funding which will help provide a stable fiscal plan for Alaska's schools. Budget stability allows districts to plan educational programs with certainty, create efficiencies and promote public confidence in schools.

To improve student achievement the Juneau School District is focusing on three distinct areas:

- Professional development of teachers and staff
- Investment in appropriate instructional materials
- Renewed effort on supervision and evaluation of teachers and staff (adopted a new teacher evaluation process last May)

Several system-wide success stories have occurred in Juneau as a result of our investments:

- Graduation rates for Juneau students up to 87% and 86% at JDHS and TMHS
- Achievement in reading has climbed steadily for four years based on higher *national* standards, and math achievement has increased even more dramatically
- Energy and excitement are being generated by a new program that improves student organizational skills and encourages non-college bound students to consider studying for a variety of postsecondary options

These improvements to student achievement have occurred during recent years of significant budget cuts but we cannot guarantee we will continue to get these results while cutting staff. This year we are cutting approximately \$5.8 million on top of the \$4.1million (5.2%) we cut last year.

We appreciate one-time funding last year, the increase to the Career and Technical Education factor, and the continued support of the Legislature to fund our retirement system obligations. This funding is a significant contribution to our district. Without this support, our mission would even be more seriously hampered. However, retirement system funds do not hit the classroom, which is where we make gains in student achievement.

Knowing our funding level in advance of key staff contract deadlines and city budget deadlines would ensure we focus our limited time on student achievement instead of budget uncertainty.

Under the current funding, more than 65 of our school staff will lose their jobs. Our superintendent put that in perspective by asking us to picture a full size school bus filled with talented and hard working people, and then watch as that bus drives onto the ferry and out of our community, as these people seek employment elsewhere. This issue stretches well beyond the doors of our school district. The Juneau Economic Development Council estimates these job losses would result in a negative economic impact to Juneau of nearly \$11.5 million

We would receive approximately \$1.3 million under SB171, which would reduce the level of cuts to be made. Passage of SB171 would result in an overall reduction of \$4.5 million (5.9%) instead of a reduction of \$5.8 million (7.4%) without passage of the bill.

We support an established BSA increase in at least one, and preferably three, years ahead to provide sufficient time to prepare and submit budgets without spending unnecessary time and resources revising budgets based on legislative action after the local process has begun.

We believe this alone will help make us more effective and will promote public confidence in Alaska schools. Any increased funding to the Base Student Allocation can only help us improve our slow progress to ensure each student, every student in Juneau, achieves the academic success we know they can.

Sincerely,



Sally Saddler, President



Andi Story, Vice-President
Juneau School Board

Cc: The Honorable Dennis Egan
The Honorable Cathy Munoz
The Honorable Beth Kerttula
Juneau School Board
Glenn Gelbrich, Superintendent, Juneau School District