

**From:** susanne and thomas [<mailto:dipietro@alaska.net>]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 12, 2014 3:29 PM  
**To:** Sen. Gary Stevens  
**Subject:** Support SB147, Avoid Junior High Model

Dear Senator Stevens:

I am writing to ask you to support SB 147 as written; specifically to increase the base student allocation (BSA) by \$404 over last year's level. This is necessary to reinstate essential programs and staff eliminated due to flat funding over the past four years.

To quantify the impact that continued flat funding will have on education, I'd like to present just one example. The Anchorage School District has **eliminated the middle school model** for next year. This essentially means **returning to the junior high model** that many of us experienced and never wish to relive. So what is lost by ending the middle school model? Currently, under the middle school model, a student moves through his/her core classes, and sometimes all seven classes, with the same small group of students. This benefits students by creating a more personal learning environment, by allowing teachers to more effectively address classroom management, and by helping students make the transition from elementary school to a seven period school day.

Just as important, the middle school model provides a 45-minute team planning period for the core teachers on a team to meet daily. This professional collaboration allows teachers time to integrate curriculum across subject areas, which has been shown to generate more meaningful learning and increase student retention. This same team planning time is used to discuss individual student learning styles, possible undiagnosed learning disabilities, student medical issues, and interventions for students at risk. Team planning time allows team teachers to organize field trips, meet with parents, counselors, nurses and administrators. It also provides time within the work day to process and analyze student data gathered through mandatory assessments. Students' Individual Education Plans (IEP's) receive review, as required by federal law, during team planning time. An IEP meeting frequently runs the full 45 minute time period, but, with IEPs that require extensive services, an IEP meeting can run two hours or more. Finally, team planning time allows teachers within the same subject area to meet and plan lessons on a regular basis.

If no additional State funding is provided to reinstate the middle school model in the Anchorage School District, then most professional collaboration and student/parent meetings will not occur. How and when IEP meetings will be held under the junior high model remains unclear. Certainly, under the junior high model, an IEP meeting will no longer include an entire team of teachers who can provide comprehensive input and the best learning plan for the individual student. Eliminating the middle school model will cause additional teacher layoffs, a disproportionate number of which will impact middle school students in their most formative years.

Please support BSA funding levels specified in SB 147 to avoid reverting to the junior high model, an archaic, assembly-line approach to education.

Thank you,  
Thomas Pease  
Anchorage