

From: PJ Ford [<mailto:fordpj@hoonahschools.org>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 21, 2017 11:06 AM
To: Rep. Daniel Ortiz <Rep.Daniel.Ortiz@akleg.gov>
Subject: Early Childhood Programs and PAT in Alaska: Preserving literacy and Native Languages

February 21, 2017

Dear Representative Ortiz,

Thank you for providing the opportunity to give feedback to the committee. Many of us wanted to speak yesterday because we are passionate about this subject.

I have been twenty years in Alaska working for Commissioner Holloway, Commissioner Cross and others. My background includes being the Alaska Director of Special Education and the Director of Teaching and Learning Support. My husband and I have spent twenty years in Alaska teaching on the North Slope, Sitka, Delta/Greely, or being a Superintendent in Hoonah. Yes, even little Hoonah has had a strong tie to early learning.

During this time I have argued at State Board of Education meetings and through our legislative halls Alaska should lead the nation in early learning! Two years I asked the Superintendent Association to please add "PRE" in front of K in our position statements. Why do I believe so strongly that it matters? Look at our reading rates by middle school, look at our suicide rates at the secondary level. Early learning does make a difference in those stages of a student's growth and learning. I suggest that if our early foundation was good that later years might not be so difficult.

My educational training was in Australia. My work with reclaiming Native languages was from my Maori family in New Zealand.

In both of those country's early learning is part of a child's life. My son started school at 4 years old in Sydney. The Maori have used early learning to persevere and sustain their language. The Ko-henga-Reo movement (Language Learning nests) assured that Maori students learned in their language as well as English. The Hawaiians, the Palauans, the Cook Islanders have all used this method so that their culture and language continue.

Alaska's "Original People" need to teach their languages to the next generation. Where is the best place for that learning besides the home, early learning programs. Hoonah City Schools, Lower Kuskokwim, the North Slope Borough to name a few districts are all using early learning venues to foster language immersion or Native Language literacy as well as English. Being a bi-lingual speaker makes a stronger student and will make Alaska a stronger world partner.

Please maintain the budget line for Parents as Teachers (PAT) and Pre-Kindergarten education. We all admire your hard work at closing the budget gap however you can not cut your way to a balance and you certainly can not afford to take out a generation of learners in this state.

If you have children, grandchildren, or neighbor children please put their faces on the committee's proposal. Would it be worth a cut to their future.

Keep asking questions and reflecting on tomorrow's generation,

**PJ Ford Slack, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Hoonah City Schools**

Happiness is a choice and an Advantage to our lives

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From: Sarah Sledge [<mailto:sarah@ceequity.org>]
Sent: Monday, February 20, 2017 8:58 AM
To: Rep. Daniel Ortiz <Rep.Daniel.Ortiz@akleg.gov>
Subject: 2018 DEED Proposed Budget Amendments

Dear Representative Ortiz:

Please accept the following written testimony regarding proposed FY18 DEED budget amendments which propose cuts in funding to our state's preK programs.

Thank you so much,
Sarah Sledge

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Sarah Sledge
Executive Director
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