



The Alaska Staff Development Network

Alaska Council of School Administrators
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Senator French
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol Building
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senator French:

I'm writing on behalf of the Alaska Staff Development Network, in support of establishing state funding and coordination for Parents As Teachers programs.

The Alaska Staff Development Network provides professional development for more than 4,000 educators across the state annually. One of the major areas of need is positive behavioral and remediation support for children that enter school unprepared and with undeveloped social skills.

James Heckman, a Nobel Prize-winning economist from the University of Chicago makes the case that the most cost effective way to improve schools is to support early childhood programs in his February, 2011 report "The American Family in Black and White."

"Schools do little to reduce or enlarge the gaps in skills that are present when children enter school. Parenting matters, and the true measure of child advantage and disadvantage is the quality of parenting received. A growing fraction of American children across all race and ethnic groups is being raised in dysfunctional families.

Investment in the early lives of children in disadvantaged families will help close achievement gaps. America currently relies too much on schools and adolescent remediation strategies to solve problems that start in the preschool years. Policy should prevent rather than remediate. Voluntary, culturally sensitive support for parenting is a politically and economically palatable strategy that addresses problems common to all racial and ethnic groups."

We urge the Alaska State Legislature to invest in proven programs such as Parent As Teachers to ensure more children are ready to succeed by the time they enter school.

Sincerely,

J. Kelly Tonsmeire, Director