Senate Finance Education Committee

Affiliated with the National Education Association

September 11, 2013

By Ron Fuhrer, President & LaDawn Druce, Vice President



- Ron Fuhrer
 - 30+ year teacher in Anchorage
 - Taught at Clark MS and McLaughlin School
 - President of NEA-Alaska





- LaDawn Druce
 - 18 year teacher in Kenai Peninsula
 Borough School District
 - 12 years at Soldotna High School and as a counselor at Ninilchik School and River City Academy
 - Vice President of NEA-Alaska





- NEA-Alaska
 - Represents nearly 13,000 teachers and support personnel across Alaska
 - 64 local associations
 - Organization direction set by 30
 member Board of Directors and approx.
 350 member who attend yearly
 Delegate Assembly





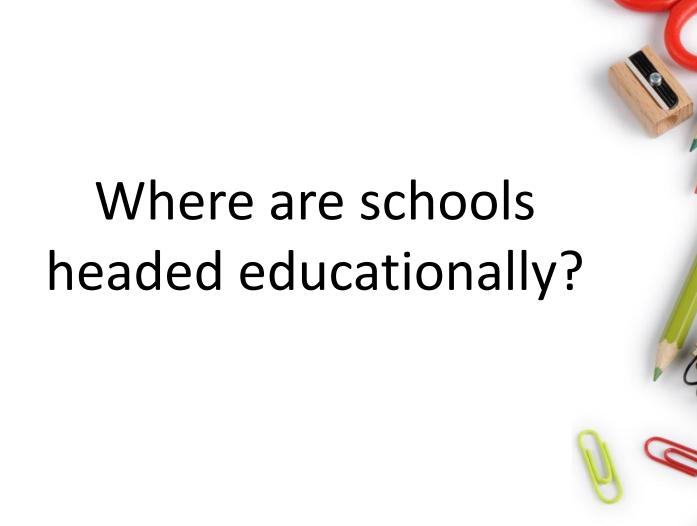
Mission statement:

NEA-Alaska exists to be an advocate for an excellent public education for each child in Alaska and to advance the interests of public school employees.

A child's learning conditions are a teachers' working conditions.







Status of Public Education

- Progress has been made
 - Over 10 years graduation rate has increased by 10%, 3x faster than national average¹
 - One-third of Alaska's public school students enter school with no preschool experience²
 - State is 3rd in nation for growth between
 4th and 8th grade





Status of Public Education

- Progress has been made (cont.)
 - Drop out rates have decreased by 20% since 2004-05 school year³
 - Alaska students score higher than the national average on ACT and SAT tests⁴





Challenges

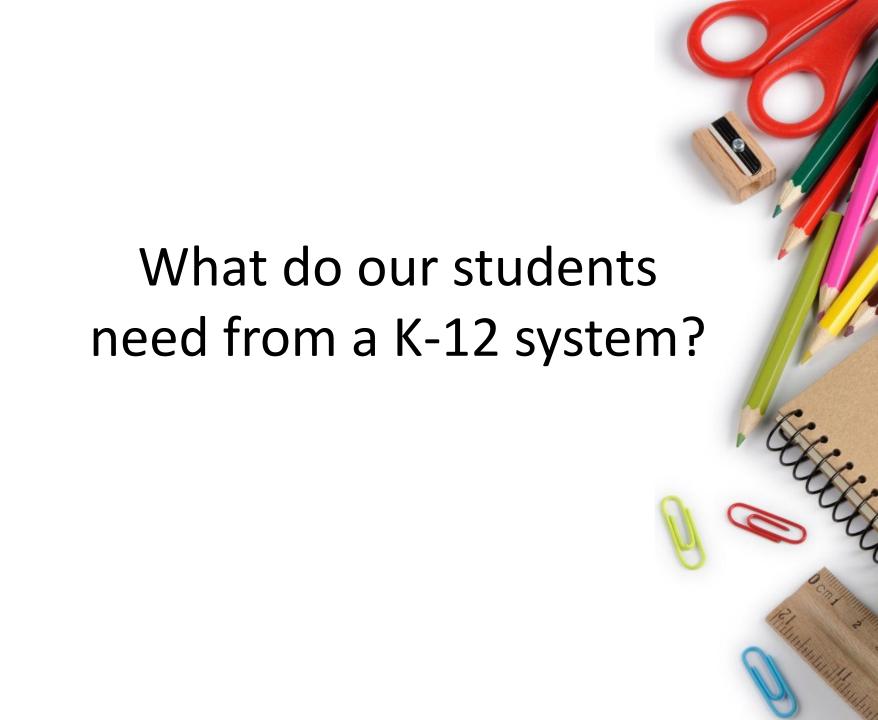
- Over 41% of students receive free and reduced lunch because of their socioeconomic status⁵
- Between the 2009-10 school year and the 2010-11, student homelessness increased by 31%⁶



Challenges

- Increased diversity more students
 English Language Learners
- From 2006 until 2011, Alaska has seen on average a yearly 20% turnover rate of teachers. Teacher turnover in rural Alaska is greater than double that of urban areas⁷





What our Kids Need

- Highly Effective Teachers
 - Educational Policies that:
 - Support team building
 - Increase instructional time
 - Increase individualized student contact
 - Embrace student diversity





What our Kids Need

- A Rich and Varied Curriculum
 - Curriculum that:
 - Meets the expectations of the communities
 - Engages the broad spectrum of student needs and interests
 - Is relevant to the experiences of the students
 - Encourages curiosity, exploration and critical thinking
 - Is innovative and responsive to community and student needs





What our Kids Need

- Effective School-Family-Community Partnerships
 - Empowered communities
 - Educators connected to community resources
 - One-size-fits-all solutions weaken public schools







Five Things to Change

A Partner in Finding Solutions

- Improve and enhance teacher evaluation system (e.g., peer review, etc.)
- Develop an Alaskan state of the art Teacher Preparation Program
- Invest in quality Early Childhood Education
- Provide a defined benefit retirement system
- 5) Develop a long-range, state education plan



NEA-Alaska is eager to be a partner with the Legislature in developing plans to ensure all Alaska's public school students receive the highest quality education opportunity no matter their geography, socio-economic status, or challenges.





"There is a place in America to take a stand: it is public education. It is the underpinning of our cultural and political system. It is the great common ground. Public education after all is the engine that moves us as a society toward a common destiny... It is in public education that the American dream begins to take shape."

—Tom Brokaw



Endnotes

- ¹ Lyndsey Layton, "High School graduation rate rises in U.S.," Washington Post, March 9, 2012.
- ² G. Williamson McDiarmid and Alexandra Hill, "Alignment of Alaska's Educational Programs from Pre-School through Graduate Study: A First Look," ISER Working Paper 2010.1, pg. 5.
- ³ Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, State Report Cards, various years.
- ⁴ Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska Anchorage, Kids Count Alaska 2011-12, pg. 37.
- ⁵ Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska Anchorage, Kids Count Alaska 2011-12, pg. 22.
- ⁶ Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska Anchorage, Kids Count Alaska 2011-12, pg. 7.
- ⁷ Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska Anchorage, Kids Count Alaska 2011-12, pg. 36.



