

# Alaska State Senate – Education Committee

Informational Hearing - Discussions & Presentations On:

“The Common Core and Alaska’s Academic Standards”

Temporary LIO, 733 West 4th Ave, Anchorage, Alaska, Room 105

January 7-8, 2014

## Participant Biographies

Arranged According To Their Appearance On The Agenda

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### *Chris Minnich*

Executive Director

Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)



Chris Minnich assumed his role as Executive Director of the in December, 2012. Chris has worked at CCSSO since 2008, when he was hired to direct the Council's standards program-the work that would later become the Common Core State Standards (Common Core). In 2009 he assumed the role of Strategic Initiative Director of Standards, Assessment and Accountability, where he led the development and adoption of the Common Core in 45 states. In 2010, Minnich became the Senior Membership Director, where he has served as the lead contact for all 57 of CCSSO's members. In the last two years, Minnich has led the Council's advocacy and communications teams in rallying states to collaboratively reform their standards and accountability systems. His efforts have been invaluable in advancing the national implementation of the Common Core, and cultivating essential cooperation between states and the federal government to improve education for all students.

Minnich has an extensive background in assessment and accountability work. From 2005-2008, he held multiple positions at Harcourt (now Pearson), all focused on the advancement and improvement of assessments. Minnich led the development and deployment of a teacher-centered online portal focused on assessment education.

As the Director of Test Design and Implementation at the Oregon Department of Education from 2003-2005, Minnich led the statewide, online assessment implementation for the Oregon Department of Education

Minnich holds a Bachelor of Science in Political Science from the University of Washington, Seattle, as well as a Masters of Public Policy from the University of Maryland, College Park. Minnich lives in Alexandria, VA with his wife Whitney and his son Carson.

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### Pam Goins

Director of Education Policy

Conference of State Governments (CSG - Education)

Pam Goins has been with CSG since 2005. In her current role, she has led implementation of the Common Core State Standards Policy Initiative educating state and local policymakers on the national effort for states to adopt common English language arts and mathematics academic standards. She also led a six-state effort to reduce childhood obesity through policymaking through a project with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.



Prior to joining CSG, Goins served as a program consultant for the Kentucky Department of Education for 11 years, serving in a regulatory and policy compliance capacity. She also was associate director for KYCID, a statewide center working with 176 local school districts in Kentucky on positive behavior supports for students.

Goins holds a bachelor’s degree in psychology from Eastern Kentucky University and a master’s degree in education from the University of Kentucky.

Areas of expertise: Increasing student achievement in K-12 setting; Bullying prevention; Leadership development; College access and success.

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### *Kathleen Porter-Magee*

Bernard Lee Schwartz Policy Fellow

Kathleen Porter-Magee is the Senior Advisor for Policy and Instruction at The College Board and a Bernard Lee Schwartz Policy Fellow at the Thomas B. Fordham Institute.

Kathleen has more than 16 years of experience in education and policy, including nearly a decade working directly in schools, first as a middle and high school teacher, then as school and district-level administrator. She has twice worked at the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, first as the associate research director and most recently as a Senior Director, where she led the Institute’s work on standards, assessment, and curriculum.



Previously, Kathleen served as the founding director for curriculum and instruction at Achievement First, and she led teacher and principal professional development and recruitment for the 115 Archdiocese of Washington, DC Catholic Schools.

She holds a B.A. from the College of the Holy Cross in Political Science and French and an M.A. in Education Policy and Leadership from the George Washington University.

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### Dr. Sandra Stotsky

Professor Emeritus, University of Arkansas  
Department of Education Reform

Sandra Stotsky is professor of education *emerita* at the University of Arkansas, where she held the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Chair in Teacher Quality. She served as Senior Associate Commissioner (a professional position) at the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education from 1999-2003, where she was in charge of developing or revising all the state’s K-12 standards, teacher licensure tests, and teacher and administrator licensure regulations. She served on the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education from 2006-2010 (a citizen position), on the National Mathematics Advisory Panel, from 2006-2008, and on the Common Core Validation Committee, from 2009-2010. She was one of the five members of the Validation Committee who would not sign off on the standards as being validated. She was also editor of NCTE’s premier research journal, *Research in the Teaching of English*, from 1991 to 1997. She has published extensively in professional journals and written several books.



She did undergraduate work at the University of Michigan and completed a doctorate in reading research at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. She was an active citizen in Brookline for many years, serving as a board member and then president of its League of Women Voters several decades ago. She was an elected Town Meeting Member for 10 years and an elected library trustee for 14 years. She also served on many school-search and selectmen-appointed committees.

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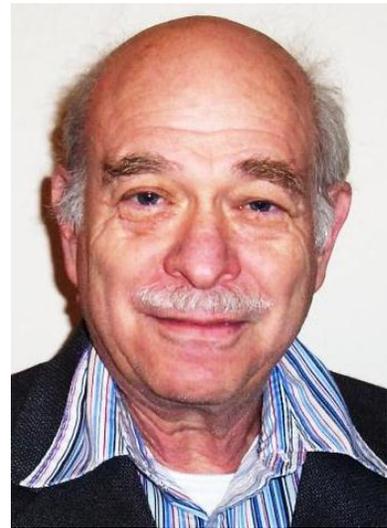
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### Dr. R. James Milgram

Professor Emeritus, Stanford University  
Department of Mathematics

An internationally recognized researcher in mathematics, he was one of the authors of the pre-Common Core California Standards, and was the main reviewer of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics *Curriculum Focus Points*. He has published over 100 research papers in mathematics and four books - in fact, he is one of just a handful of mathematicians asked to help publish his or her collected works. As evidence of his accomplishments in his field, he was awarded the Gauss Professorship at the University of Gottingen in 1989 - one of only three mathematicians to be awarded the Gauss Chair in the last 40 years. He was also awarded the Distinguished Visiting Professorship in the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Beijing in 2000, a position rarely awarded to mathematicians.



In 2004 he was chosen to deliver a series of lectures to Japanese mathematicians and other scholars on his work in robotics, informatics, and protein-folding. In this country, he was awarded the prestigious Ordway Professorship at the University of Minnesota. He was the Regents Professor at the University of New Mexico, and has given many named lectures at top universities throughout the country. Dr. Milgram served on the Validation Committee that was charged with overseeing the development and writing of Core Standards. He was the only member of the committee to hold a content area Ph.D. All the others were education degrees from schools of education.

He has also served on the NASA Advisory Council and the National Board for Education Science that oversees all research at the U.S. Department of Education. He received his undergraduate and master's degrees in mathematics from the University of Chicago and his Ph.D. in mathematics from the University of Minnesota.

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## Mike Hanley

Commissioner

Alaska Department of Education & Early Development

Mike Hanley began his tenure as Commissioner of Education & Early Development on February 3, 2011.

Hanley served as a teacher in the Anchorage School District from 1991 to 2005. He served as an elementary school principal in the Anchorage School District from 2005 to January 2011. Hanley also has experience owning and operating commercial fishing and landscaping businesses.

In Anchorage, he coached youth soccer, basketball and running, and was a board member of the Campbell Creek Science Center, which provides outdoor activities for youth and families.

Hanley holds a bachelor of arts degree in business administration from Bethel College in Minnesota, a bachelor of arts degree in K-8 education from the University of Alaska Anchorage, and a master’s degree in educational leadership from UAA.



## Dr. Susan McCauley

Director, Teaching & Learning Support

Alaska Department of Education & Early Development

Dr. McCauley has served as an educator in Alaska for 19 years, beginning her Alaskan career as a teacher in Hooper Bay where she spent four years. She then served as a principal and director for fourteen years in the Mat-Su School District. Dr. McCauley joined the Department of Education & Early Development as the Director of Teaching & Learning Support in January 2013. She earned a Ph.D. in Education Policy & Leadership from the University of Alaska Fairbanks and holds certificates as a principal and superintendent.



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## *Jim Merriner*

Chair

Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development

A lifelong Alaskan and a graduate of Bristol Bay’s Dillingham High School, Merriner holds a Bachelor of Arts in Modern European History from Harvard College and a Master of Philosophy in School Development from Cambridge University. He currently administrates at the Interior Distance Education of Alaska (IDEA) statewide correspondence school, has worked as a teacher and administrator in both public and private schools in Alaska, and has commercial fished in Bristol Bay every summer since 1985.



Merriner also served as then-Lt. Governor Sean Parnell’s Chief of Staff. In addition to his volunteer work as the Chair of the Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development, Merriner volunteers as a Commissioner of the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE), and as a member of the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children.

Merriner enjoys engaging in Alaska’s myriad outdoor activities with his four school-age children and his wife of 21 years, particularly backcountry skiing, mountain biking, and rock climbing.

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### *Dr. Dana Thomas*

Vice President of Academic Affairs,  
University of Alaska – Statewide System

Born and raised in Fairbanks and a UAF Biology Program alum, Dr. Dana Thomas returned home to develop a Statistics Program at UAF in 1981 after completing his graduate work in Oregon. He served six years as Chair of UAF's Department of Mathematics and Statistics.

In 2005, Dr. Thomas received the Emil Usibelli Distinguished Teaching Award. While on faculty at UAF, he arranged U.S.A.I.D. contracts to work two years in the Republic of Yemen facilitating a national survey of agriculture and two years in the Sultanate of Oman improving their fisheries statistics operations.

From 2006 to 2012, Dr. Thomas served as UAF's Vice Provost and Accreditation Liaison Officer. The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities has had him serve as an institutional accreditation evaluator of other institutions. Dr. Thomas is recognized for his interdisciplinary research on the design and analysis of studies assessing resource (food and habitat) selection by animals.



### *Dr. Diane Hirshberg*

Associate Professor of Education Policy  
Institute of Social & Economic Research  
University of Alaska-Anchorage

Diane Hirshberg is Associate Professor of Education Policy at the Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA), and director of the UAA Center for Alaska Education Policy Research. Her research interests include education policy analysis, indigenous education, circumpolar education issues, and school change. Dr. Hirshberg teaches in the UAA Honors College and the College of Education.

She has a PhD in Education from UCLA, a Master of Public Administration from Columbia University and a bachelor's degree from UC Berkeley.



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### *Ed Graff*

Superintendent  
Anchorage School District

Ed Graff was appointed superintendent of the Anchorage School District on March 18, 2013. Mr. Graff began his teaching career in 1991 at Gladys Wood Elementary School. Nine years later, he became an elementary school principal in the district. In 2008, Mr. Graff was named executive director of Elementary Education. The following year, he became the Chief Academic Officer. A graduate in Elementary Education at the University of Alaska Anchorage, Mr. Graff holds a Master's Degree in Education Administration from University of Southern Mississippi. He has post-masters coursework in curriculum, educational leadership and instruction. Mr. Graff has served on several boards and professional organizations, including Junior Achievement, School Business Partnerships and Alaska Learning Network.



### *Dr. Darla Jones*

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum & Instruction  
Anchorage School District

Dr. Darla Jones has served the Anchorage School District since 1991 in a variety of roles, including middle school language arts teacher, middle and high school technology coordinator, supervisor of the Educational Technology Department, and most recently as the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction. Dr. Jones holds a Bachelor's degree in English and American Literature from Brown University, a Masters Degree in Instructional Technology from Johns Hopkins University, and a doctorate in Educational Leadership from the University of Oregon. Dr. Jones is recognized statewide for her work and has been named an Apple Distinguished Educator, Technology and Learning's Teacher of the Year for Alaska, and the Alaska Society for Technology in Education's Administrator of the Year.



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### *Pete Lewis*

Superintendent

Fairbanks North Star Borough School District

Lewis began his career as a teacher in Spokane Public Schools in 1982 where he was a teacher and activities coordinator. He has experience as a middle and high school principal. Lewis earned his bachelor’s of art and master’s of education degrees from Whitworth College. He is currently a doctoral candidate at Washington State University (WSU).



### *Melanie Hadaway*

Secondary Curriculum Coordinator

Fairbanks North Star Borough School District

A lifelong Alaskan, Melanie Hadaway began teaching in 1995 in the Bering Strait School District and moved to Fairbanks in 1998 to teach English. She worked as a district-wide instructional coach and is presently the Secondary Curriculum Coordinator for the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District. Melanie earned a Bachelor of Arts and her teaching credentials from the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, and holds a Masters of Arts in Curriculum and Instruction from Saint Xavier University. She is currently completing a Masters degree in Educational Leadership from the University of Alaska – Anchorage.



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### Peggy Cowan

Superintendent

North Slope Borough School District

Peggy believes in the importance of high expectations and positive relationships. Throughout her career she’s emphasized learning about the globe through local examples and validating local culture, history and knowledge. Prior to coming to the North Slope Borough School District, she was Superintendent of the Juneau School District. She was also the Assistant Superintendent and Director of Curriculum and Assessment in the Juneau School District.



Peggy is a former Superintendent of the Year in Alaska. She was an administrator in the Alaska Department of Education for fourteen years, supervising areas of science, math and Native education. She also served as an adjunct member of the faculty of the University of Alaska for sixteen years, paralleling those fourteen years and prior to that worked for Alaska Sea Grant and the School of Education at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

She has a bachelors in education from Cornell University, a Masters from the University of Michigan and Educational Leadership Credential from the University of Alaska.

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## *Dr. Elizabeth ‘Lisa’ Skiles Parady*

Assistant Superintendent

North Slope Borough School District

Dr. Parady has served the North Slope Borough School District (NSBSD) as the Assistant Superintendent for six years. Dr. Parady initiated and leads the place-based, culturally relevant Curriculum Alignment, Integration and Mapping (CAIM) initiative, which is viewed as a potential education model for Alaska and other indigenous cultures. CAIM uses the District’s Inupiaq Learning Framework (ILF) as the foundation, integrated with the Alaska State Standards through the best practice of Understanding by Design (UbD) created by McTighe and Wiggins. Dr. Parady has substantial experience in education leadership and has been elected by her peers in Alaska to the national governing board of the American Association of School Administrators.



Previously, Dr. Parady led the Human Resources sub-cabinet for the Governor of Wyoming with a policy portfolio that included K-12 education, community colleges, University of Wyoming, health, social services and corrections. She served as Chief of Staff of the Wyoming Department of Education. She also led the creation of the Wyoming Department of Workforce Services and served as a director in the Governor’s cabinet, planning and implementing the integration of 34 programs from 5 agencies into the new department.

Dr. Parady earned her doctorate in educational leadership and administration, and also holds a Juris Doctorate having previously practiced law.

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## *Sunni Hilts*

President, Board of Directors  
Association of Alaska School Boards

A 42-year resident of Seldovia, Sunni Hilts was elected president of the AASB Board in November 2013, succeeding Sue Hull of Fairbanks. She has served on the Kenai Peninsula Borough School Board for ten years.

Sunni raised 5 children and two grandsons in Seldovia. Her thirteen grandchildren and three great grandchildren include Tsimshian/Inupiat, Tlingit, Aleutiq, and Ethiopian children. Her family and her residencies in rural Alaska have solidified her commitment to quality education for every student in the state, regardless of locale. She believes children should be Alaska's top priority.



## *Norm Wooten*

Director of School Improvement & Governmental Relations  
Association of Alaska School Boards

Norm Wooten has served on the Kodiak Island Borough Board of Education since 1990. He has served in numerous positions and various committees, including five terms as president. His service with AASB began in 1993 when he was first elected to the board, where he served until 2009, twice as president. Norm was also the president of the National School Boards Association for 2007-2008. In 2009, he joined the AASB staff as the Director of QS2.



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### *Dan Sullivan*

Mayor, Municipality of Anchorage

First elected in 2009, Mayor Dan Sullivan is currently serving his second and final term as Mayor of the Municipality of Anchorage.

Dan was born and raised in Alaska, graduated from West Anchorage High School and received his bachelor’s degree in political science from the University of Oregon. From 1998 to 2008, he served the maximum of three consecutive terms on the Anchorage Assembly.

Dan is the founder and co-owner of McGinley’s Pub in downtown Anchorage and has been a small business owner for nearly 30 years. Dan was also the Executive Director of the highly successful 1996 Arctic Winter Games, held in Anchorage.

His wife, Lynnette, is an award-winning elementary school teacher and their daughter Jennifer graduated with honors from the Anchorage School District and from the University of Oregon’s Clark Honors College in 2009.



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### *Tim Parker*

English Teacher  
Lathrop High School  
Fairbanks, Alaska

Tim Parker has taught for 16 years and was honored as the 2007 BP Teacher of the Year for Fairbanks. Prior to becoming a teacher, Tim was a journalist for various newspapers in Alaska and Washington state, spending seven years with the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner.

Tim graduated from Pacific Lutheran University in 1989 with degrees in economics and communication. He received a masters in curriculum and instruction from the University of Alaska Fairbanks in 2004. Tim started his teaching career in middle school, but switched to high school in 2003 when he was asked to take over as the newspaper advisor for Lathrop High School, a position he has held for the past 10 years. The award-winning school newspaper provides students with high-quality, real-world publishing and writing experience. The school paper at Lathrop dates back to 1936, making it one of the longest-running publications in the state.

Tim has high standards for students, and believes they learn best when challenged to create real-world products that demonstrate their learning. Writing to inform, persuade, and entertain forms the backbone of human communication. Learning how to present that in a professional manner is what gives students the confidence to maximize their own school experience.



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### *Chris Benschopf*

Mathematics Teacher  
Lathrop High School  
Fairbanks, Alaska

Chris was born, raised, and educated in Fairbanks, Alaska. He was named the 2012 BP Teacher of the Year for Fairbanks, and has been teaching at his alma mater Lathrop High School for 6 years.

Chris earned his Bachelor's degree in mathematics, graduate teaching license, and Master of Education all at UAF. Currently he is finishing a Master of Science degree in Resource and Applied Economics, as well as pursuing his doctoral degree in education with a specialization in learning, instruction, and innovation. Chris has also earned his National Board Certification for teaching mathematics to adolescents and young adults, and was named the 2013 Alaska State Teacher of the Year.

Chris now teaches at Lathrop High School in the mathematics department. He currently teaches Integrated Algebra, Precalculus, Computer Programming, AP Computer Science, and AP Statistics. Chris works hard to provide the best possible education to all his students, and looks for new ways to encourage and support the same in his colleagues. The greatest joy Chris has in his work, is helping provide a rich and varied curriculum to the students he works with.



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## Rebecca Gerik

English Language Arts Teacher  
South High School  
Anchorage, Alaska

Rebecca Gerik has taught English at South High and Service High in the Anchorage School District for fifteen years. She has a BA in English from Santa Clara University, a MA in Teaching from UAA, and most recently National Board certification. Her experience with Common Core English Language Arts standards comes from culturally relevant course alterations for Title VII Indian Education online English courses to align them with the Common Core and the development with an Anchorage School District team of curriculum for ninth grade genre studies and tenth grade world literature to meet the Common Core standards.



She initially worked with the Alaska standards at a meeting to focus on culturally relevant language for Native Alaskan students. Throughout the process of adapting course work to the new standards, Rebecca has been impressed with the rigorous requirements and the variety of options to meet these Common Core standards.

## Denise Lisac

K-5 Reading Teacher  
Dillingham City Schools  
Dillingham, Alaska

Denise has been named Teacher of the Year for 2014. She has taught in Dillingham for 30 years after graduating from Northern Michigan University and teaching in the lower 48. She has continued her professional development throughout her career. Prior to becoming a reading teacher she taught Kindergarten and First Grade for 25 years.



Denise has been a member of both the Alaska Science Consortium and Alaska Writing Consortium. She is a member of the Dillingham School Wellness Committee, and participated in their district science, reading and writing curriculum committee.

Denise believes that a strong sense of classroom community is necessary for students' success. Effective classrooms require collaboration among teachers, students and parents. I am passionate about teaching reading and I strongly believe reading is critical to success in school and in careers.

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### Mary Janis

Kindergarten Teacher  
Orion Elementary  
Anchorage, Alaska

Mary Janis is in her 24th year of teaching in the Anchorage School District (ASD), Orion Elementary. Most of her career has been spent teaching Kindergarten, but she has also taught Special Education Resource, First Grade and Second Grade. She has a Bachelors of Education in Elementary Education, minor in Biology from the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Washington. She received a Masters in Special Education along with a teaching endorsement in Special Education from the University of Alaska, Anchorage.



She is the 2010 Presidential Award for Excellence in Math and Science Teaching in the area of Science. She is Co-Chair of AEA’s Evaluation Committee and has worked jointly this year with the ASD to rewrite the evaluation document to incorporate the new state regulations and statutes.

She is a member of NEA’s Leading the Profession Committee. In the 2011-2012 school year she was a member of the Teacher Quality Working Group, which was tasked with making recommendations to the Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development on changes to teacher evaluation statues and regulations. This year Mary is Orion Elementary’s Danielson Teacher Leader, charged with training teachers, along with the principal, in the Danielson Framework as part of ASD’s new Teacher Evaluation System.

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### Cheryl Romatz

Third Grade Teacher  
Kalifornsky Beach Elementary School  
Soldotna, Alaska

This is Cheryl's 24<sup>th</sup> year of teaching. She was recently the Intervention Teacher, Intervention Team Coordinator, Assessment Coordinator, and Aimsweb Trainer for her building. Cheryl is currently the PBIS Coordinator for her school. She was nominated for a BP Teacher of the Year Award last year. She was previously a Title I teacher and has taught every grade level from Kindergarten through Sixth Grade. She believes that her job is to continually engage her students by providing them a positive, rich, academic experience daily. She earned her BA in Elementary Education from Saginaw Valley State University in Saginaw, Michigan and her Master's Degree in Educational Technology from Michigan State University in East Lansing, Michigan. She is especially proud of the Spartan football team this year.



### Laura Nevada

2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Inclusion Teacher  
Bayshore Elementary  
Anchorage, Alaska

Ms. Nevada has proudly worked as an educator within the Anchorage School District since 1996. She is passionate about improving data-driven differentiated instruction that allows all students to achieve their full potential.

Highlights: Graduated for Alaska Pacific University with a BA in Elementary Education; Denali Award recipient; RTI Coordinator; member of CCSS Basal Alignment Project; ASD Mentor Training; SBS for Bayshore Elementary



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### *Juan San Miguel*

President-Elect

Alaska PTA

Juan San Miguel was born in Guayama, Puerto Rico, raised in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania and currently resides in Anchorage, Alaska. He graduated from Bethlehem Catholic High School, Central Texas College (Associate in General Studies), and Alaska Pacific University (Bachelor in Organizational Management). He served in the United States Army from July 78 until September 92 and attained the rank of Sergeant First Class as a Food Service Specialist. Juan was stationed at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, Ft Dix, New Jersey, Ft Richardson, Alaska and Aberdeen Proving Grounds, Maryland. He has attended Leadership Anchorage as well as numerous leadership courses in the military.



Juan is married to Teresa for 32 years with three daughters, Teresa Marie (27), Cassie (25) and Kristine (21). He also has two grandsons Dakota (8) and Christian (7). His daughters attended Abbott Loop Elementary School where he was involved in the PTA and served one year as the PTA VP. Dakota and Christian are now attending Abbott Loop and his daughter Cassie is the President of the PTA for school year 13-15. Juan serves as the President Elect, Alaska PTA for school year 13-15 and sits on the National PTA’s Military Family Support Committee. He also serves as President of the Board for the Alaska State Association for Guardianship and Advocacy (ASAGA) serving guardians and advocates in Alaska and represents ASAGA as a member of the States Affiliates Council for the National Guardianship Association.

Juan currently owns Louisa’s Legacy providing Care Coordination, Private Guardianship, Conservator, and Trustee services to vulnerable adults and the elderly in Alaska.

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### *Candy Jo Bracken*

Vice President - Region IV

Education Chair

Alaska PTA

Candy Jo Bracken was raised in Tazlina and Glennallen, Alaska and currently resides in Anchorage, Alaska. She graduated from Glennallen High School and University of Alaska, Fairbanks (Associate of Applied Sciences, Paralegal Studies). She also received an invitation to attend West Point Academy. She left Alaska in 1998 with her husband when he was stationed in FT Hood, TX with the US Army, but they soon returned in 2000, when the assignment was completed.



Candy Jo has been married to Christopher for 15 years and they have 3 sons, Alexander (12), Ian (9), and Connor (6). Candy Jo is very active in their education. She is currently the Campbell Elementary PTA Treasurer, Alaska PTA Region IV Vice President and Alaska PTA Education Chair. She has also previously been involved as the Secretary for the Immaculate Conception Elementary PTO.

Candy Jo is currently a Project Manager for Total Electric Supply Company, an electrical wholesale company, in Fairbanks, Alaska. She also works as a waitress for her family at Eureka Lodge whenever she goes to visit.

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### *Daniel Thatcher*

Senior Policy Specialist  
Education Program  
National Conference of State Legislatures



Dan Thatcher previously covered education finance at the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) from 2006 to 2010. Beginning September 2011, he returned to cover education finance and Common Core State Standards (CCSS). With funding from the Gates and Hewlett Foundations, he currently tracks statewide education finance developments and CCSS implementation and legislation. Dan has worked with state legislators in a variety of capacities for over ten years, including service as a Hinckley Intern in the Utah State Legislature in 2004. Dan received his BS in political science from the University of Utah and his law degree from the Sturm College of Law, University of Denver. Issue Areas: education finance, education finance litigation, Common Core State Standards

### *Michelle Exstrom*

Education Program Director  
National Conference of State Legislatures



Michelle Exstrom is Program Director at the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) where she oversees the Education Program’s work on educator effectiveness, assessment, resource reallocation, Common Core State Standards and school choice and staffs the Education Standing Committee. Ms. Exstrom has been serving state legislators for over 15 years. During the past 14 years at NCSL, she has provided research and testimony to state legislatures, published annual reports on education legislation in all 50 states and numerous reports, books and magazine articles on education policy.

Prior to NCSL, Ms. Exstrom served as a Senior Legislative Assistant in the Colorado General Assembly’s Office of Legislative Legal Services. In this capacity, she assisted in drafting finance, taxation, and state and local government legislation and with legal research for the General Assembly.

Ms. Exstrom holds a bachelors degree in Political Science, graduate-level paralegal certification, and is completing her masters degree in Political Science with an emphasis in politics and public policy.

# Alaska State Senate – Education Committee

Informational Hearing - Discussions & Presentations On:  
“The Common Core and Alaska’s Academic Standards”

Temporary LIO, 733 West 4th Ave, Anchorage, Alaska, Room 105

January 7-8, 2014

## Lauren Heintz

Research Analyst, Education Program  
National Conference of State Legislatures

Lauren Heintz has worked with the Education Program at the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) as the program generalist since 2012. Lauren works on several ongoing projects in the Education Program covering issues such as afterschool and out-of-school time, school safety and discipline, and state standards and assessments. Before joining NCSL, Lauren worked with the public affairs and policy program at the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce, as a citizen advocate in the Colorado governor’s office and as an intern for several Colorado state legislators. Lauren received a B.A. in political science and a B.A. in international studies from Colorado State University.



Issue Areas: standards and assessments, school safety and discipline, time and learning, attendance, literacy, special student populations

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## *Carly Williams*

Junior, Palmer High School  
Palmer, Alaska

Carly Williams is a 17-year old Junior at Palmer High School. She has lived in Palmer for 16 years with her parents. At Palmer High she is an International Baccalaureate student, participates in the National Honor Society, is an active member in both the Student Government Executive Board and the Junior Class Government as a Junior Class Representative, and plays the baritone sax in the jazz band.

She serves on her district's School Board as the Student Rep and on the Student Advisory Executive Board. Carly serves students statewide on the Alaska Association of Students Governments Executive Board and the State Board of Education as the Student Rep to the State Board of Education.

Carly hopes to attend college in the Pacific Northwest, after she finishes high school at Palmer.



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### *Ariel Hasse*

Junior, Mat-Su Career and Technical High School  
Wasilla, Alaska

Ariel Hasse is a junior at Mat-Su Career and Technical High School, where she continues to better herself and her community. Recently she was elected to be President of the Alaska Association of Student Government. Through her position, she has managed to continue the Suicide Prevention efforts, improve statewide communication, spread awareness of student voice, and further empower the students of Alaska.

At home she serves as her district’s Student Advisory Board President as well as her school’s student government president, where she is serving her second term. In her community she actively pursues updating policy, advancing technological use, and broadening the pathway for student input.



While Ariel is truly passionate about student voice, since a very young age she has held an undying love for science. With her involvement in Science Olympiad, Science Bowl, and Tsunami Bowl, she has won several state competitions, and one national medal. With her knowledge she is also a resource for younger children pursuing science and her own peers. One of her many initiatives was creating an International School of the Future competition for students to explore architecture, sustainability, and community ([futurehighschool.org](http://futurehighschool.org)). Her passion for student voice, science, and education has allowed her to begin to make a positive difference at home and out of state, an endeavor that she will continue for life.

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### *Kobe Rizk*

Freshman, West Valley High School  
Fairbanks, Alaska

Kobe Rizk is a freshman at West Valley High School in Fairbanks and currently serves as the class president. He stays abreast of education reform and keeps himself up to date with the education battles being fought on a local, state, and especially federal level. Currently, he is the Student Advisor-Elect for the Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development and looks forward to his tenure as Advisor. Kobe is a strong believer in keeping students first and making sure teachers are allowed to tailor their educational experience specifically to the needs of their students.



Kobe has lived in Fairbanks all of his life and enjoys fishing, coin collecting, his pet reptiles, and federal politics. Kobe is an active member of his community and attends most local board meetings. In the future, Kobe looks to start his own medical practice and after that, he would like to run for public office preferably on a federal level. Kobe already considers himself a candidate for the presidential election of 2044.