



Anchorage School District

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March 14, 2013

Rep. Lynn Gattis, Chair
Education Committee
Alaska House of Representatives
State Capitol, Room 420
Juneau, AK 99801

Rep. Lora Reinbold, Vice Chair
Education Committee
Alaska House of Representatives
State Capitol, Room 432
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representatives Gattis and Reinbold,

I write to you in support of the intent of HB 151 to provide a statewide school grading system for the purpose of improving accountability and transparency.

As a parent and a member of the Anchorage School Board I am familiar with the many good things Alaska's schools are doing, and the challenges we face as we strive to improve student performance. Two of the pillars in any effort to improve student performance are high standards and meaningful measures of student progress.

In the past, the Alaskan public didn't have a clear and concise way to understand how their local schools were performing. However, over the last year, the Anchorage School District (ASD) has taken steps to improve both the accountability of its performance and transparency of its allocation of resources. The "Final Budget Supplemental Report", available for download at the district's website at <http://www.asdk12.org/budget/>, is our District's first step in that effort. The report provides a concise compilation of data that has not been included together previously: student enrollment, personnel allocation, cost per student, and 5-year trend State

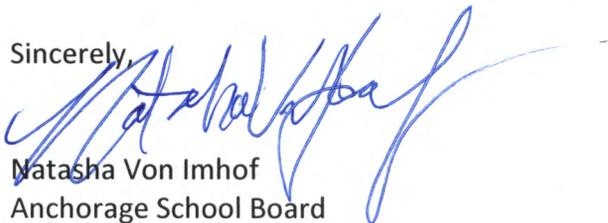
Based Assessment (SBA) test scores, for each school in our district. You'll note our graphical presentation of the 5-year trend in SBA scores allows parents and policy makers to quickly assess not only the level of achievement of individual schools, but their growth over 5 years – a robust measure of sustained improvement. You'll also note that the report includes data on the student demographics of individual schools – including transience/mobility – to better able parents and policy makers to understand the nature of the challenges faced by each school. I'm looking forward to working on this report to ensure that the Anchorage School District is a national leader in providing clear concise measures of student performance in schools on the way toward improving student performance.

I would like to ensure that the Department of Education's school grading system developed under HB 151 does not inadvertently create a conflict with the District's ongoing efforts to provide improved accountability and transparency. Along those lines, it may be useful to consider continuing to allow school districts, such as Anchorage, who have developed school performance grading systems and have begun to integrate them into their public communications, to prominently display those grading systems in their budgets, schools and on their websites.

One potential way to accomplish this would be to amend Section 5(g) to allow school districts who have performance grading systems to prominently display their performance designations in their budgets, schools and on their websites and other public media in a manner that does not conflict with the intent of HB151 to encourage accountability and transparency.

I applaud you for your efforts to improve education in Alaska by focusing on transparency and accountability, as I think it's well past due. Thank you for your efforts in this area.

Sincerely,



Natasha Von Imhof
Anchorage School Board