



# FAIRBANKS NORTH STAR BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

520 Fifth Avenue Fairbanks, Alaska 99701-4756 (907) 452-2000

www.k12northstar.org



March 9, 2022

Members of the House Finance Committee  
RE: HB 272 & 273

This letter is to provide input on HB272 for increasing Base Student Allocation (BSA) and HB 273 to inflation adjust the BSA in future years. My name is Ellis Ott, Ph.D. and I am the statistician for the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District (FNSBSD).

I fully support HB 272 and HB 273. I believe the details about education costs have been addressed adequately by the majority of public comments and invited testimony. However, I'd like to focus on the particular issue of Alaska's education system and the reference to NAEP scores (National Assessment of Educational Progress).

The NAEP is extremely limited for several reasons:

1. No scores for individual students
2. No scores for any school district in Alaska
3. NAEP measures Achievement, but not Growth/learning
4. Only administered every other school year
5. Only administered in grades 4 and 8

Because of these limitations (and several others), there is no utility in the NAEP for improving education in Alaska. The only data that's available is for the entire state.

The Education Opportunity Project at Stanford (<https://edopportunity.org>) has taken every state's assessment data in grades 3-8 from 2008-09 to 2017-18 as well as the NAEP to provide both Achievement and Growth data on a common scale! They refer to Growth as "learning rate". The project addresses issues #2-#5 above!

The result for Alaskan Achievement (-0.4) is in line with the NAEP results. As noted in comments from legislators, Alaskan Achievement is low. However, Alaska's result for "learning rate" is +11.5% learned more each year than the national average. There is only **one** state that had a higher learning rate and that was Arizona. So, what that means is that Alaskan Achievement is low, but

Alaskan **Growth** is high. Students are learning at a higher rate in Alaska than all other states except one.

What does this mean for Education and the interest in improving Achievement? We will need even higher learning rates for many years to pull the state average up. I would also note that since you're comparing averages, it wouldn't take a large change in the scale score to achieve the national average (or better). For example, an 8 scale score point gain in Alaska's 4<sup>th</sup> grade Reading average would bring us to the national average – with the entire scale ranging from 0 to 500 and the standard deviation at about 37, I think it's possible. Investments in both Education and Education innovation like HB 272 and 273 as well as SB111 (which I also support) can help push Alaska's Achievement up.

The majority of school districts across the state administer an assessment that provides both Achievement and Growth data on a national scale 3 times **every** school year. Each school district selected this assessment independently. It is called Northwest Evaluation's (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP). The assessment addresses all 5 of the issues I referenced with the NAEP. The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (ADEED) has contracted with NWEA to create the state's summative assessment this school year (AK Star). I recommend that the legislature request that ADEED provide a mechanism to report MAP and AK Star results to the public at the state level, by school district, etc. This would address the NAEP issues of national comparison data for Achievement and Growth, individual student scores, school district scores, frequency of testing, and number of grade levels (3-9). It would also have students, parents, teachers, principals, administrators, community members, ADEED, and the legislature looking at the same data to put us all 'on the same page'.

I completely support full accountability in Education for both Achievement and Growth. I've created a publically available data dashboard for FNSBSD with extensive longitudinal, comparison, and filterable data for full transparency. See the dashboard here:

<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/k12northstar#!/>

Again, I fully support HB 272 and HB 273 and believe more in-depth review is needed of both Alaska's Educational Achievement and **Growth**.

Respectfully,

*Ellis Michael Ott, Ph.D.*

Senior Research Analyst  
Fairbanks North Star Borough School District

Cc: Executive Directors at FNSBSD  
School Board at FNSBSD  
Representative Adam Wool, District

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**From:** Oona Martin [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, March 07, 2022 9:23 PM  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** Testimony on HB 272 and HB 273.

Dear State Representatives,

I implore you to please raise the base student allocation (BSA). Insufficient BSA funding is exhausting for administrations. Schools need to be secure and need to be a priority.

Education, by far, is the longest view a government can take.

Respectfully,  
Oona Martin

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**From:** Ellis Ott [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 3:04 PM  
**To:** House Finance  
**Cc:** Executive Directors; School Board; Rep. Adam Wool  
**Subject:** Public Comment HB 272; HB 273  
**Attachments:** HB272-273-Ellis-Ott-in-Fairbanks-Public-Comment.docx

House Finance Committee,

I have attached my public comment for HB 272 and HB 273.

Major points for K-12 Education:

1. Evaluating our Education system needs to include both Achievement and Growth
2. Although Alaskan Achievement is low, Alaskan Growth is high
3. Alaskan Growth is higher than **all other states** except Arizona.
4. MAP assessment should be reported statewide to provide Achievement and Growth data with national comparisons in grades 3-9 multiple times each year with results for the state, school districts, and schools. The NAEP is far more limited.

See the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District's Data Dashboard:

<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/k12northstar>

(for #2 and #3 evidence, see Education Opportunity Project at Stanford: <https://edopportunity.org>)

Thank You,

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Ellis M. Ott, Ph.D.  
Senior Research Analyst  
Technology  
Fairbanks North Star Borough School District  
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**From:** Sharon Stockard [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 1:45 PM  
**To:** House Finance  
**Subject:** School bond debt reimbursement

Dear Finance Committee,

I understand that fully funding the school bond debt reimbursement has been restored in the proposed budget. I support this program and urge you to pass it without amendments. School construction and maintenance are vital to the health of our school buildings and save more money than putting it off, especially maintenance. The state reimbursement takes some of the load off local taxpayers who support maintenance and construction but need some assistance from the state. We are all partners in school construction/maintenance. Please pass this t bill as is without change. Thank you.

Sharon Stockard  
Anchorage

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**From:** michal [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, March 07, 2022 3:31 PM  
**To:** House Finance; Rep. Matt Claman; Sen. Mia Costello  
**Subject:** Funding for education

Hi

I'm writing to let you know that I support increasing funding for education. As the parent of two school aged kids, education is one of the most important issues for me. I'm concerned that Alaska kids have some of the lowest test scores in the nation. Let's give our schools the resources they need to educate our kids properly.

Thank you.

Michal Stryszak  
Anchorage 99517