

HB

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REPRESENTATIVE LES GARA(907) 465-2647 | State Capitol Building, Room 400 | <http://www.replesgara.com>**HB331** [Statement PDF](#) | [Sponsor's BILL Listing](#)**Sponsor****Statement****House Bill 331 "Base Student Allocations; Principals"***"Catching the Base Student Allocation up with Inflation and Incentivizing Excellent Principals"*

Funding to schools for staff, course enhancement, and increased achievement has been flat for the past four years, and Governor Parnell again proposes funding that lags behind inflation in the fiscal year 2015 operating budget. As a result, education funding has fallen roughly 7% behind inflation since fiscal year 2011. Flat funding is the reason why we've lost over 600 teachers and staff the past three years and will lay off over 200 more counselors, support staff and teachers in fiscal year 2015 without a fix in the governor's proposed budget.

House Bill 331 accomplishes four things. First, it would increase the base student allocation by \$404, from \$5,680 to \$6,084. Second, in ensuing years it adjusts the base student allocation to reflect the change in the Consumer Price Index based on the Anchorage metropolitan area to avoid future layoffs. Third, the bill requires school districts to file an annual plan for achieving district goals and priorities for hiring and retaining principals of excellence for the subsequent school year, and requires the department to annually report to the legislature by February 1 how much funding will be needed to maintain the ratio of teachers to students and the number of teachers, counselors, nurses and support staff in each district from the previous school year.

Finally, House Bill 331 provides a one-time \$5,000 bonus to be paid to each principal of excellence for the purpose of recognizing the principals' commitment to success. Principal leadership is second in importance only to teacher instruction among school-related influences on student learning. There are virtually no documented instances of troubled schools being turned around without intervention by a powerful leader. Investments in good teachers through a BSA increase and excellent principals is a particularly good cost-effective way to improve teaching and learning, and effective principals are critical to retaining quality teachers. Nearly 60% of a school's influence on student achievement is attributable to principal and teacher effectiveness; exceptional principals account for as much as a quarter of that.

House Bill 331 keeps school funding at the same pace as inflation, makes up for two of the last three years of inflation losses, will avoid the cuts schools are discussing, likely allow them to rehire lost staff to improve student achievement, provides predictable funding so schools can save money by planning into the future, and incentivizes excellent principals who are so critical to school and student success.

REPRESENTATIVE LES GARA