



KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

Office of Superintendent

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January 24, 2012

Senator Bettye Davis
Alaska State Senate
State Capitol
Room 30
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Senator Davis,

The Kenai Borough School District (KPBSD) supports your legislation that if passed, would increase the Base Student Allocation (BSA). The proposed funding increases of Senate Bill 171 and 139 will provide KPBSD with a revenue amount that is close to what is needed to keep us whole for FY13 and more importantly allow us to financially plan for the coming three years. One of the more frustrating aspects of K-12 finance in Alaska is our annual creation of a budget without knowing the expected level of revenue. I am pleased that your legislation would eliminate some of this uncertainty.

The three-year fiscal plan that was a result of the Education Task Force of 2008 allowed KPBSD to make some significant improvements. With the certainty of funding, KPBSD strategically increased our support for struggling learners and expanded our offerings at the high school level. We can now show that these improvement efforts that were made possible by the state's three year commitment to forward funding have paid off. Our struggling learners are having more academic success, the number of referrals for students with learning disabilities is down and our dropout rate has slightly decreased. Unfortunately, we are once again at a similar point to where we were in 2008 with budgets being created without a known level of revenue.

As I am sure you know, the practice of setting the funding level for schools at the end of the legislative session does not allow for the type of improvements mentioned above. KPBSD cannot in good faith, begin an improvement effort or bargain a contract without having a good sense of future revenue levels. Also of note is that the practice of setting the funding level for K-12 at the end of the school year does not allow us to retain some of our best nontenured teachers or make the very best hires for our classrooms. In sum, if the expectation is for schools to improve, then it is reasonable to put in place a funding plan that allows districts to adequately plan of the future.

Please let me know if I can provide more information on why forward funding of K-12 education is important to the students of Alaska.

Sincerely,

Steve Atwater, Ph. D.
Superintendent