

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

ASD MEMORANDUM #139 (2009-2010)

November 23, 2009

TO: SCHOOL BOARD
FROM: OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

SUBJECT: DISTRICTWIDE KEY MESSAGES

ASD Goal: *ASD's staff will be well-trained, highly effective, well-informed and committed to the success of all students and staff.*

PERTINENT FACTS:

An organization must deliver its messages in a clear, consistent manner to effectively communicate with both internal and external audiences. This is particularly important for organizations such as the Anchorage School District, which have many different spokespeople addressing employees, parents, students and the community at large. With this in mind, the Communications department has developed four key messages to be used in district communications efforts, including written correspondence, media interviews, and face-to-face conversations.

The most effective key messages are concise, truthful and easily substantiated through supporting statements. The Communications staff used the newly developed school board goals and the Five Pillars of the Anchorage School District to guide the message development. This helped ensure that the key messages are relevant to current district efforts.

School Board Goals

- All students will graduate from high school college and career ready.
- The achievement gap will be erased.
- Education in the highly diverse ASD will be accessible, culturally responsive, supportive of students and safe.
- Parents/guardians will be informed partners in their student's education.
- Education will reflect 21st century learning.
- ASD's staff will be well-trained, highly effective, well-informed and committed to the success of all students and staff.
- All ASD departments support the mission of the district and will be highly effective, efficient, and responsive to internal and external customers.

The Five Pillars

These pillars, or vision statements, were developed in 2004 by the Public Relations Steering Committee. Committee participants included ASD principals and teachers, department supervisors, and support staff from all levels.

1. **Vision:** ASD has set goals and creates strategies to accomplish those goals.
2. **Accessible:** As a public school district, our doors are always open. What we do is transparent to the public, and the community is welcome to contact us in person, by phone, fax, e-mail or regular mail.
3. **Committed and accountable:** We are dedicated to our students' academic success. We welcome accountability measures and encourage public oversight of our actions.
4. **Quality Education:** ASD is committed to providing the best educational program available to our students, providing them with the instruction and support each of them needs to achieve his or her full potential.
5. **Engaged:** Our employees are not only dedicated to our students, but to our community. We care. We are involved. We have a personal stake in making our neighborhoods and our cities better.

The ASD Key Messages

- 1. Anchorage parents, businesses and the community are essential and valued partners in helping ASD fulfill its mission.**

Supporting statements

Positive parent involvement is essential to student achievement. Research shows that when families are involved in a child's education, test scores are higher, attendance is better and students have a more positive attitude.

ASD encourages parents to take an active role in their child's education and reaches out to them through a variety of methods, including parent-teacher conferences, PTA meetings, telephone calls, newsletters, and invitations to school functions.

ASD has a very active School Business Partnership program in which schools and businesses give to each other through the donation of time and resources.

Community feedback is welcome and encouraged. Comments and suggestions can be sent at any time via e-mail, the asdk12.org Web site, telephone or in person.

- 2. ASD provides a quality education to all students. Our teachers and staff work diligently to ensure that all students graduate prepared for life beyond high school.**

Supporting statements

The dropout rate has decreased steadily for the past several years. The preliminary 2008-09 dropout rate is 3.53 percent.

The graduation rate has improved to 70.48 percent.

ASD students continue to outperform state and national averages on the SAT and ACT college entrance exams.

- 3. As an effective steward of public resources, ASD remains open and accountable and seeks public input in the responsible use of funds and facilities.**

Supporting statements

The ASD budget is developed through a highly public process. Community feedback is welcome and encouraged. Comments and suggestions can be sent at any time via e-mail, the asdk12.org Web site, telephone or in person. There are also many opportunities for public comment during school board meetings.

ASD's budget includes \$23.1 million for regular and major maintenance projects at the 93 school buildings and support facilities maintained by the district.

Fifty ASD school buildings are between 20 and 50 years old. Nine additional buildings are more than 50 years old. When structural improvements and expansion are needed, ASD strives to renew buildings rather than rebuild, unless the age of the building limits the ability to provide same quality educational parity of program and facilities across the school system.

- 4. ASD provides a caring and nurturing environment in which students and staff can reach their highest potential.**

Supporting statements

Parents and students have many educational options within the Anchorage School District. The district offers these options because each student is important to us, and the instructional method that is the best for one child may not be the best for another.

ASD has a strong English Language Learners program to support the 12 percent of students whose primary language is not English.

ASD's Special Education program provides excellent support to the 14 percent of students receiving special education services.

The Title VII Indian Education program has helped Alaska Native students increase their graduation rate more than 15 percentage points in the past year.

The district's Training and Professional Development department provides important life-long learning opportunities for ASD teachers, principals and staff, helping the district increase the number of highly qualified paraprofessionals and teachers and developing the district's future leaders.

The supporting statements listed under each key message are examples, not a comprehensive list. The messages were designed to be broad enough to be applicable to nearly any effort undertaken by the district. When discussing a topic of importance, the communicator should first determine if one or more of these key messages are relevant to the topic. If so, those messages should be worked into the discussion.

ASD already has a strong, positive image in the community. According to the 2008 General Issues survey, 74 percent of respondents were satisfied with ASD's performance. Through the consistent use of these key messages, ASD will be able to further cultivate that positive image by sharing factual information about the great things the district is doing every day.

CC/HS

Prepared by: Heather Sawyer, Executive Director, Communications

Approved by: Carol Comeau, Superintendent