

**ANCHORAGE SCHOOL BOARD  
LEGISLATIVE CANDIDATE SURVEY**

Name: Kevin Meyer

District: Senate District O

**Please limit each response to no more than 50 words.**

**1. 21<sup>st</sup> Century Challenges:**

The economy and demographics of Alaska are changing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Even as state and federal standards require districts to bring all students to greater proficiency, employers demand graduates with continually increasing and changing content competencies.

A. How do you think our schools/district should change to ensure that all students receive an education that will equip them to succeed?

*I think that the school district and schools should expand the business partnership program in order to get a better understanding of what the private sector and businesses are looking for and what skills are valued and needed in the current workforce and the future workforce. Technology training is definitely key, as is more vocational technical instruction with on-the-job training and encouraging apprenticeship-type programs.*

B. What, if any, is the role of the legislature in implementing or facilitating these changes?

*The Legislature plays a key role in implementing these changes. The Legislature is responsible for ensuring that adequate funding is provided to our school districts in order to meet the educational needs of our children. Part of meeting our children's educational needs, is preparing them for life after school; to give them the skills to succeed in the workforce.*

C. What ideas do you have to help school districts prepare Alaska's students to meet the current and growing demand for a trained and technically skilled workforce?

*School districts definitely need to start advancing and encouraging participation in vocational-technical education and opportunities. Expanding programs at the King Career Center is a great start, but also looking at the classes and opportunities in each individual school so that students without transportation options have the same ability to attend and excel in these classes. Partnering with business and trade groups is another way to provide more opportunities for students. A great and successful example of this is the Alaska Construction Academies, where the Anchorage School*

*District has partnered with the Anchorage Homebuilders, AGC, and Alaska Works Partnership.*

**2. Increasing Technology Needs for Student Learning and Parent Access to Information:**

Not always visible, but critical to the success of the whole education program, technology must receive the increased attention required to keep up with ever-expanding demands.

A. What role do you see technology playing in education of today's students for jobs of the future?

*Technology is a very important aspect in the education of today's youth. In a competitive global economy, our children need the skills and knowledge to compete and succeed. Technology is one of those skills. As the Co-Chairman of Finance, I was able to secure technology grants for our local schools: SmartBoards for classroom instructions, mobile computer labs, new computers, and new software in order to keep our teachers' instructional methods current, as well as the skills of our children.*

B. What is your plan for providing adequate funding to meet the growing and ever-changing need for technology in our schools to keep our students competitive in the global market?

*As the Co-Chair of Finance responsible for the capital budget, I have been able to secure grant funding to improve access to technology in classrooms and schools, update software and programs, and giving teachers new tools to teach students about technology and increase their access to new technology. I will continue to support funding for these grants and will look for ways that we can expand funding in this area.*

**3. Early Childhood Education:**

Alaska is one of only ten states that do not offer early childhood education for 3- and 4-year-olds. What are your thoughts about providing early childhood education opportunities in Alaska?

*The State of Alaska has supported Head Start programs for some time now, and we even have increased the state's contribution to the federal program over the past few years. I think that early education programs are important for families and parents who choose to enroll their children in them. We need to encourage an early start for our young minds and these programs have shown to give our kids a huge step up.*

#### **4. Highly Qualified Staffing Needs:**

What ideas do you have to help Alaska school districts attract and retain highly qualified and ethnically diverse teachers, principals and other professional staff?

*I would be open to evaluating the TRS Tier III established in 2006 to see if it is harmful to recruitment and retention of qualified teachers and what changes we can make to ensure that it is not hurting the ability of school districts to have the best teachers in our classrooms. I think that the best thing that we can do is continue and expand successful programs such as the mentoring program. These programs have proven to increase retention of teachers. We have provided incentives to rural areas and communities for low interest teacher housing loans, which has been proven to be a good recruiting tool. I support continuing this program through AHFC.*

#### **5. Capital Needs:**

The State of Alaska currently estimates that school districts need about \$1 billion this year to meet current requirements for new schools and major maintenance to existing facilities. Anchorage alone has \$800 million in identified needs (at today's costs) over the next ten years, but outstanding bonded indebtedness has become a concern to local voters. As a legislator, how would you propose that we address this need?

*The past four years as Co-Chair of the Finance Committee, I have led the effort to extend the 70/30 matching program. This is the best opportunity to meet the needs of the district without burdening local tax payers with the full cost of major maintenance. There is a backlog of major maintenance across the state, and I will continue to fight for the continuation of this program in order to benefit all of our communities. Likewise, capital grants that I have secured will help in whittling down the list of needs and will pay for school improvements so that the school district does not have to pay for them.*

#### **6. Ideas for Improving Alaska's Public Schools:**

Please discuss any ideas you have about improving Alaska's public schools or the way we fund them.

*1. I believe that we should expand the teacher mentoring program in an effort to retain great teachers in our classrooms;*

*2. Expand the use of technology and availability of technology in our classrooms, which includes providing teachers with access to training on how to implement the use of the technology in the classroom and engaging students in the use of technology;*

*3. Look for ways to provide additional educational services to students with special educational needs; and*

*4. Look for ways that the State can step forward with additional funding for successful programs.*