

**ANCHORAGE SCHOOL BOARD
LEGISLATIVE CANDIDATE SURVEY**

Name: Val Baffone

District: House District 28

Please limit each response to no more than 50 words.

1. 21st Century Challenges:

The economy and demographics of Alaska are changing in the 21st 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 am in favor of eliminating No Child Left Behind. I think that our schools would be more effective if local districts in cooperation with the state set the standards for our Alaskan students. I also support strengthening our early education programs that have proven to be effective in getting kids off to a good start. We need to reduce class size. This is just to name a few. I would certainly look to educators and parents to help develop best practice models for success.

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

We need to work with our Congressional Delegation to repeal NCLB. We need to provide full and forward funding for education in order for our school districts to responsibly plan and budget. We also should be a leader in promoting a dialog within the education community to find good solutions that will improve our educational programs for the benefit of our kids and Alaska.

- 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?

I support better vocational training opportunities. I would like to see more partnering with industry and apprenticeship programs to help bring graduating students into a productive work force. I want to see every student graduate and be prepared to succeed in college or move toward a good job in a trade or business that enable them to be productive citizens and make a good living.

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?

We will be required to stay competitive in the work place and ensure that students are able to learn in a best models environment. Our schools need to be proactive and always striving to do better so the students have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

- 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?

I will be very attentive to our educators, school administrators, parents, businesses, etc... to make sure that we are making smart choices in the investment of education in our state. We must set the bar high. Our children deserve no less. We are fortunate to be a resource state that allows us to predominately fund our schools and government with our resource revenues. However, with this good fortune comes serious responsibility that include education that keeps Alaska competitive and on the leading edge in technology. Technology has the ability to drastically reduce some of the commercial limitations we have had due to our geographical location.

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?

I think early education should be offered.

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?

Our educators should be paid a highly competitive wage and provided with benefits that promote recruitment and retention. We also need to work together to be sure that our educators continue to be motivated, supported and fully engaged with their students.

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 capital budget needs to be utilized to help with these needs. We can also set up a segregated fund with some of our surplus revenue for school districts capital needs. Deferred maintenance has created serious problems. Our schools are a huge capital investment and they need to be properly constructed and maintained. Infrastructure that supports our schools (and general education needs), energy costs and public safety are my top priorities.

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.

I want to work closely with the education communities to help come up with good solutions and sensible methods of improving education. I served for many years

as a CASA, Boys and Girls Club Board Member, Senior Advisory Member of numerous other community based organizations. Through this experience I have developed a good appreciation for the insight and assistance that our community volunteers and organizations offer to problem solve and find solutions often “outside the box”.