

**Academic
Policy
Committee
2019 - 2020**

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Dear Rilke Schule families,

March 5, 2019

As you are likely aware, Governor Mike Dunleavy's proposed budget means substantial cuts to public education funding. If this budget passes, there will be a serious impact to our school.

School Funding

As proposed, our Rilke Schule budget would be cut by nearly one million dollars, or roughly one quarter of our entire budget. It is likely that this would result in the loss of 11 educators, which could require increasing class sizes from current levels to 35 – 42 students per class. As board members and parents, this is unacceptable to all of us.

As a charter school, we already receive less funding than neighborhood schools for things like transportation and food services. In addition, we pay our school operating expenses directly out of our budget unlike other schools whose facilities are maintained by ASD. For example, we pay for things like electricity, heat, snow removal, and our building lease payment (of over \$700K per year) from funding we receive from the state.

Even while operating with a substantially smaller budget, our award-winning charter school outperforms most neighborhood schools. We cannot withstand additional cuts.

Position Elimination

Like all teachers in our district, Rilke's educators are members of the teacher's union. In accordance with ASD and union requirements, factors like seniority and area of specialization determine which positions will be eliminated if the budget is not restored to current levels. As required by the union, seniority is based on a district-wide standard rather than the length of time a teacher has been at our school. Unfortunately, we have no control over this process. Teachers with less than five years with the district are most vulnerable to being cut.

Rilke Schule Needs Your Help

- 1) Please contact your state legislators and tell them that cutting education is not the right way to balance our state's budget. Use this link to find contact information for your legislators based on where you live: <http://akleg.gov/senate.php>. If you are unsure of who represents your area, scroll to the bottom of the page and put your address in the box labeled, "Who Represents Me?"
- 2) In addition, please contact the legislators for the Rilke Schule area. Josh Revak: Representative.Josh.Revak@akleg.gov and Chris Birch: Senator.Chris.Birch@akleg.gov. Suggested talking points are below, but we encourage you to personalize these messages.

- Please restore full funding to the education budget, and reject cuts to this important area. Current levels of education funding in Alaska are already inadequate for excellence in education.
 - Cutting 24% percent of our budget and eliminating 11 positions will devastate our award-winning program. Our charter school outperforms most neighborhood schools and we cannot withstand additional cuts to our already tight budget.
 - Immersion schools have unique teaching requirements and our teachers possess specific qualifications for our immersion environment. The survival of our high-performing school depends on our ability to retain our highly trained educators.
 - Having to put 35 – 42 students per class is completely unacceptable, especially for a language immersion program.
- 3) Although this is primarily a state funding issue, ASD will also be making difficult decisions that will directly affect Rilke Schule. We encourage you to share your concerns with the school board also. Their email address: schoolboard@asdk12.org .

The APC is actively working with the district and our legislators to understand all the implications of these proposed cuts and how we can mitigate the potential damage to our award-winning school, our teachers, staff and students. As the process progresses, we intend to hold an open house to discuss what all this means for Rilke Schule.

As always, the APC is interested in hearing from you. Please email us at apc_rilke@asdk12.org.

Kjersti von Wichman – APC Chair
 Givvy Kochanowski – APC Vice Chair