Superintendent Report – April 2017

Enrollment: Our enrollment this past month was 1,262.05, which is a little bit down from last month. (Count 1, 275.66)

Since the last School Board meeting:

- Congratulations to the Girls and Boys Basketball teams for winning Regions and for the Girls getting 2nd at State!
- Congratulations to the Boys Basketball team for earning recognition by the National Federation of State High School Associations’ National High School Spirit of Sport Award for their bravery in the apartment fire last year!
- Congratulations to 5th grader Finnian Murphy, who earned 2nd in the State Geo Bee!
- Congratulations to SHS English Language Arts teacher Kersten Christianson for winning 1st, 3rd, and an Honorable Mention in the 23rd Annual Alaska Statewide Poetry Contest – Adult category!
- Sincere thank you to students Emma Falvey, Coral Papoi, and the Honor Society students who have made monthly contributions to their classmates’ health and safety through their support of the Blessings in a Backpack program!
- Alaska statewide PEAKS assessment was conducted since the last School Board meeting. The paper and pencil window has concluded, which is the method each school selected except for Pacific High School. PHS’ computerized test window closes on April 28th.
- Music Fest. Wow… THANK YOU to all of the families who housed students and chaperones, businesses who donated food and funds, and to the Coast Guard for donating an entire spaghetti dinner for students and chaperones! Music Fest is a whole lot of work that has a huge economic benefit to the community, and it couldn’t happen without everyone pulling together to make it happen. A heartfelt Thank You to everyone involved!
- Earlier this week Steve Bradshaw received the Alaska Superintendent’s Association’s Honorary Member Award at our Legislative fly-in. Steve and Sandy were at the banquet to receive the award, as was John Holst! The ASA Honorary Member award is given to a retired superintendent who has left a lasting legacy with their work in Alaska as a superintendent. Congrats Steve! John has also previously won this award from his superintendent colleagues.
- Rebecca Himschoot wrote an article that appears in a peer reviewed journal for Science teachers. The article is about the Bio Blitz that she did while working as the Science teacher at Keet Gooshi Heen Elementary School.
- Mary Suminski and Rachel Roy have been invited to serve in the parent role on Alaska Education Challenge committees. Thank you for your service to students of Alaska!
- Cassee Olin and I went to the Alaska Council of School Administrator’s Legislative Fly-In earlier this week, and we had a number of meetings with Legislators and learned much about the budget and various education bills.

Current Happenings:

- The Alaska House and Senate are finalizing their plans to enter into Conference Committee on the Operating Budget. There are a number of education bills in the process; however, we have been told that when the 90 days of session ends on April 16th, all bills not passed into law will be tabled until the 2nd session of the 30th Legislature, which could mean a reprieve from any new unfunded mandates for next year.
- At our recent Budget Worksession I introduced some conversation starters that would likely take 3-5 years to implement and would help us to re-define our educational model in Sitka to align with best practices in what we know about education today. One of the ideas on the list was to move 2nd grade students down to Baranof. This idea got a number of people excited, so we are starting to look into whether or not this actually is a possibility and if it is, would we implement this next year or another year. Over the next few weeks we have a series of meetings planned with the teachers to vision what a K-2 and a 3-5 school might look like, and see what may come of this process…

Things on the Radar:

- I will be traveling the week of April 24th to Cleveland, Ohio to participate in the League of Innovative Schools meeting. Cultural Director Nancy Douglas will join me. While there we will visit classrooms in the Mentor School District and talk with colleagues about how best to move forward our own initiatives. Some of our projects we work on through our involvement in the League is our mobile makerspace cart, competency-based education at Pacific High School, leveraging research to help inform our instructional practices, and providing individualized learning supports to students.
- I have again been asked to teach the Digital Leadership class this summer to students in the UAS Superintendent Endorsement program. In lieu of receiving personal payment for being the Instructor, UAS makes a donation to Sitka Schools in the amount that I would have been paid. Last year and this year the money was/will be used to support our mobile makerspace project. The class lasts for 3-hours a day and runs for 2-weeks in July, which is a naturally quiet time at work. Teaching this class helps promote our standing as a leader in educational technology in Alaska!