Superintendent Report - March 2016

Enrollment: [Count: 1,315.2/Budget: 1,305]
Intensive Student Count: 38 [budgeted for 37]

Since the last School Board meeting:

- Congratulations to SHS DDF for winning 2nd overall at State!
- Congratulations to SHS Battle of the Books team for being the statewide winners!
- Congratulations to SHS Mock Trial teams for winning State and taking 4th!
- Special appreciation to Lindsey Jorgenson for her excellent coordination of the Region V Basketball Tournament!
- We welcome Kathy Hope Erickson to the position as Education and Language Director at the Sitka Tribe of Alaska!
- Margaret Galanin wrote two White Elephant grants to support snacks at our 21st Century activities and gardening supplies for the PHS afterschool garden program. Thanks to the White Elephant for funding these critical projects!
- Tim Fulton and I were on Problem Corner last month and we will be again. Thanks to Larry for the discussions and opportunity, and to Dan Etulain for helping us to get the word out about our interest in discussions with community.
- Alaska Measures of Progress (AMP) Update: We are continuing to prepare for the AMP assessment that will be held at different times during the month of April for students in grades 3-10; it takes about 4-6 hours in total to administer the Math and English Language Arts AMP assessments per student. Although this will be the last year of the AMP assessment, it will give us some comparison data for the two years it has been the statewide student assessment. Because of federal requirements, there is no option to substitute local assessments for the AMP assessment this year. I hope that we as a community and district take the AMP assessment seriously, as it is the assessment upon which we will be rated as a school district even though it will be changing next year. We didn’t give up on the Standards Based Assessment (SBA) the last year it was administered, so I hope the same is true this year for the AMP assessment.
- Thank you to Blatchley English Language Arts Teacher Alexander Allison for being part of EED’s Statewide Task Force that is helping to shape the next statewide assessment – this will be the replacement for the AMP assessment.
- 2016-17 Calendar Update: Although the process took longer than we originally planned, we did go through a thorough information gathering and vetting process with our school staff, and then got feedback from families about the 2016-17 calendar recommendation. Thank you to everyone for being part of the process. Once we feel we have a good new calendar model, then we will build calendars for 2-3 years out.
- Health Insurance Update: With the City and Community Hospital, we will have a 15% increase to our health insurance premiums. Originally we were looking at a 25% increase at a cost of $800,000 just for the increase, so this is good news!
- Commissioner of Education Update: At the Superintendent Legislative Fly-In, we had a chance to thank Commissioner Hanley for his work on behalf of students, and welcome Interim Commissioner Dr. Susan McCauley.
- Budget Update: The state of the state budget really is that dire, and we need to be realistic about how we deal with the fiscal crisis. There are some good proposals being put forward that I encourage people to look seriously at and then advocate for whichever proposal they think will help us avoid a fiscal apocalypse. Individual action is needed!
- School Board Goal: Foster family engagement by researching and adopting models that support welcoming and academically sound schools:
  - We completed the School Climate and Connectedness Surveys for students and staff in grades 3-12. This survey provides vital data that helps us identify ways to improve the climate in our schools.
  - We held a community discussion facilitated by the First Alaska Institute and in coordination with our Wooch.een for Student Success School Board/Tribal Council committee to discuss how to make our schools more welcoming. This is part of our Association of Alaska School Board’s (AASB) i3 Social Emotional Learning grant.
- We reached a tentative agreement with the Sitka Education Association (SEA) union. The teachers have voted to ratify the contract, and now it will come before the school board for final approval. Thank you to the entire negotiations team for the discussions and process!
- An arbitrator has been selected for the SESPA Community Schools grievance with the next step to identify the date.
- I traveled to Juneau for the Superintendent Legislative Fly-in, which was combined with the Business Manager Legislative Fly-in. It was an informative 4-day trip that will help us to build our budget. Also, Cassee Olin and I were able to talk with a number of legislators about the impact of school funding, what great things we are doing in Sitka Schools, and we worked to help shape legislation that has been submitted for consideration.
Current Happenings in the District:

- SESPA negotiations are still in process
- Spring Break is the week of March 14th
- Region V hosting in Sitka only happens because of dedicated individuals both associated with SHS and MEHS. This is a huge undertaking, and the efforts both by staff and by the community are deeply appreciated.

Things on the Radar:

- I do not have any work trips before the next school board meeting
- The Citizen Task Force is holding a Town Hall meeting on Monday, 3/21 at 6:00 pm. The Citizen Task Force is currently recommending that the school district budget be cut by $200,000 from what we received last year, and that we have a $200,000 cut for the next three years for a total reduction of $600,000. This is part of the Grand Bargain they are putting forward to the community in exchange for a 2 mil increase. I encourage people to attend and participate in the Town Hall meeting to express their viewpoint about the proposed Grand Bargain.
- STA is holding a Paddle Making workshop in our SHS wood shop this weekend to make paddles for students to use in the SEARHC canoe that students will paddle to Celebration in early June