

2016 Alaska Legislative Candidate Questionnaire

Christina Sinclair, House District 3
Submitted September 15th

Alaska PTA aka Alaska Congress of Parents and Teachers, Inc. represents approximately 7,000 members from 116 schools around the state. The Alaska PTA Advocacy Committee would deeply appreciate your taking the time to answer our questions about your perspective on public education in Alaska. Providing quality public education is one of the most important sectors that we can invest in, when one considers the impact it has on the future of our children and thus the competitiveness of our state.

The questionnaire will be used to provide a synopsis of candidate positions to our members, in order to better inform them of candidate positions prior to the November election. We respectfully ask that you complete and submit the questionnaire prior to September 15th, 2016.

1. Please provide your name and the Alaska Legislative seat you are a candidate for.

Christina Sinclair, House District 3

2. What do you see as the three top challenges facing the delivery of public education in Alaska today?

Currently, the top three challenges facing the delivery of public education in Alaska are funding, access to materials like books, computers, and internet, and current elected officials that don't make education a priority for Alaska.

3. What is your understanding of the "Every Student Succeeds Act", and what potential effects it can have on public education in Alaska?

My understanding of the ESSA is that it is intended to replace the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The major differences between the two are that accountability is placed on the state from the federal level. There is still the standardized testing that has plagued teachers and schools. Placing the accountability to the state makes it more important than ever that Alaska's elected officials can come together and ensure enough resources are given to every student. The State House and Senate already have problems understanding the importance of education. We need to act now and get people in office this November that understand the importance of educational funding and Alaska's children.

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4. Do you think Alaska public schools are adequately funded?

No, Alaska public schools are not adequately funded, especially those schools in the villages.

5. Would you support an alternate revenue stream for public education in Alaska (one example would be an education head tax similar to that which was in place in 1980)?

Yes. We must find new revenue for our children's education. If this means a tax, then so be it.

6. Do you support the continued minimum enrollment of 10 students to keep rural Alaska schools open to serve our rural communities and students? AND Do you support increasing graduation rates among Alaska Native students since according the National Center for Education Statistics they have one of the lowest graduation rates in the country and are residing in many of these rural small school locations?

Rural Alaskan schools are not just places of education, but a place of community interaction. Just because less than 10 children are located in a community doesn't mean that those children aren't worth an education. We as a state must ensure that every child, especially the Native child, has the ability and resources to graduate high school like every other child in the state.

7. Would you support a comprehensive fiscal plan that includes new revenue streams, in order to preserve funding for public education?

I would want to review and talk to my constituents, but I would personally support establishing new revenue streams in order to preserve and advance funding for public education.

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8. Do you support funding universal pre-kindergarten as part of a complete education system in Alaska?

Yes. Being educated in Early Childhood Education, I completely understand and have read the research on universal pre-kindergarten such as the Head Start program. Because I see how great it can be for children and families, I would want ensure its funding in Alaska.

The Alaska Legislature has considered legislation that proposed a constitutional amendment to allow public money to be spent on private schools, especially. Private schools can pick and choose students and are not held to the same standards as public schools for the quality and content of education. Public schools serve all students, regardless of race, religion, disability, or socioeconomic status.

9. Do you support changing the Alaska Constitution to allow public money to be spent on private or religious schools?

No, funding should stay in public schools. Private education is not held to the same standards like public education is. If a family wants their child in a private school that is up to that family, but many families don't have the money to make that choice. We must focus our limited funding and resources on the public school system only.

Research suggests parental involvement in a child's education contributes to improved academic performance, better social skills, greater attendance rate, and a higher likelihood of completing a post-secondary education.

10. Do you support the federal government funding a statewide family engagement center for Alaska?

From my current understanding, I believe a federally funded statewide family engagement center sounds like a great idea for Alaska and would support it.