

2016 Alaska Legislative Candidate Questionnaire

Harry Crawford, House District 27
Submitted September 14th

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.

Harry Crawford, House District 27

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

1. The extreme poverty of some of our students and their families when they are living in cars, homeless shelters, or couch surfing with friends or family and many times attending multiple schools within the school year.

2. Students that don't speak English and are not ready to be put in a normal classroom setting because of the language barrier.

3. Class sizes that are too large for kids to fully benefit from their classroom experience

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

I know some of what the act purports to do, but I guess it remains to be seen how well it meets those purported goals. I've heard that it doesn't spend as much time testing as NCLB and doesn't evaluate teachers based on pupil performance. I also hear that the state has to intervene in schools that are low-performing or graduate less than 67% of their students. The results have yet to be seen.

For each of the last six years, school districts across Alaska have cut their budgets and eliminated programs and positions due to local, state and federal funding levels that have remained flat. Thus we have the following questions:

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

No. class sizes in many areas are just too big. We are cutting back on aspects of the school experience that I believe are essential to a good education.

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)?

I would support a plan that gets more money to the classroom. I would be open to alternate ideas if it accomplishes that goal.

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 to 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?

I am not in favor of increasing the minimum. I would love to increase grad. rates. A task easier said than done. I am open to suggestions.

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

Yes

There is a large body of research that documents the benefits of early childhood education on overall student outcome, and graduation rates. In addition, this research suggests that pre-kindergarten programs can reduce the possibility of a student becoming incarcerated later in life.

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

Yes

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. It isn't working in Louisiana and we shouldn't take that backward step here.

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?

Yes. I would like to hear more about this approach.