

2016 Alaska Legislative Candidate Questionnaire

Scott Kawasaki, House District 1
Submitted September 13th

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.

Scott Kawasaki, State House District 1

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

Having a sustainable budget will top all efforts this year. In addition, following federal mandates with a legislature that is opposed to testing. Small schools in rural districts and ensuring they have teachers and resources will also be a challenge.

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

I support much of the ESEA including tests that can show accountability, student success and teacher involvement.

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?

Our schools are not funded to the level they need to be to get the desired result of improving educational outcomes. Some schools need more resources and hardly any have enough.

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 support an alternative revenue stream for public education and a budget for education that is passed earlier in the year so school boards can pass their budgets earlier.

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 support the minimum enrollment numbers to rural schools. I also support districts and REAA's who want to combine to improve efficiency. Graduation rates among every Alaskan should be a priority and we are letting rural Alaskan children down.

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

Yes. I support an comprehensive fiscal plan

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?

I have been a strong advocate for statewide, universal, voluntary Pre-K and have introduced legislation for the last five Legislatures. I support state funds to districts who wish to adopt Pre-K within their schools.

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?

I have constantly fought against public money spent on private businesses and schools.

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?

I support parental involvement. I want to know what extra 'strings' the federal government funding would come with.