

Joint Anchorage Municipal Assembly/School Board Meeting
September 19, 2014
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
City Hall, Conference Room #830
632 West 6th Avenue
Anchorage, Alaska

ASSEMBLY

Patrick Flynn, Chair
Dick Traini, Vice-Chair
Amy Demboski
Bill Evans
Elvi Gray-Jackson
Ernie Hall
Paul Honeman
Jennifer Johnston
Pete Petersen
Bill Starr
Tim Steele

Dan Sullivan, Mayor

SCHOOL BOARD

Eric Croft, President
Kameron Perez-Verdia, Vice-President
Tam Agosti-Gisler
Bettye Davis
Pat Higgins
Kathleen Plunkett
Natasha von Imhof

Ed Graff, Superintendent

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. ROLL CALL
 - 2.A. ANCHORAGE ASSEMBLY
 - 2.B. ANCHORAGE SCHOOL BOARD
3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS JOINT MEETING
 - 4.A. Joint Meeting – June 13, 2014.
5. ADDENDUM TO AGENDA
6. ITEMS OF BUSINESS
 - 6.A. SRO Program.
 - 6.B. 2015 ASD Bond Proposal.
 - 6.C. 2014 ASD Recap and Outlook.

7. COMMENTS

8. SCHEDULE OF UPCOMING JOINT MEETING(S)

8.A. December 12, 2014 - 10:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M. - ASD Education Center Boardroom,
5530 E. Northern Lights Blvd.

9. ADJOURNMENT

**ALL DOCUMENTS LISTED ON THIS AGENDA ARE AVAILABLE ONLINE
www.muni.org/watchnow AND IN THE MUNICIPAL CLERK'S OFFICE, 632 WEST 6TH
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Joint School Board - Assembly Meeting (Friday, June 13, 2014)

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Anchorage School Board

PRESENT:

President Eric Croft, Tam Agosti-Gisler, Bettye Davis (arrived at 10:09), Pat Higgins, Kameron Perez-Verdia (arrived at 10:05), Kathleen Plunkett, Natasha von Imhof

Anchorage Assembly

PRESENT:

Chair Patrick Flynn, Dick Traini, Ernie Hall, Tim Steele, Elvi Gray-Jackson (arrived at 10:10), Pete Petersen, Bill Evans, Jennifer Johnston

ABSENT:

Bill Starr, Amy Demboski (excused), Paul Honeman

Also present were Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) Budget Advisory Commission member Shirley Nelson, MOA Clerk Barbara Jones, Anchorage School District (ASD) Superintendent Ed Graff, ASD Chief Financial Officer Mark Foster, ASD Chief Operating Officer Mike Abbott, ASD Chief Academic Officer Michael Graham, ASD School Board Secretary Katy Grant, and other interested parties.

Meeting called to order at 10:02 AM

A. Call to Order, Roll Call, Flag Salute

1. Call to Order, Roll Call, Flag Salute

President Croft called the meeting to order.

B. Minutes of Previous Joint Meeting

1. Approval of March 21, 2014 Joint Meeting Minutes

Mr. Traini moved to approve the minutes of the March 21, 2014 Joint Meeting.

Mr. Hall seconded.

C. Addendum to Agenda

1. Approval of Agenda

Mr. Petersen moved to approve the agenda.

Mr. Traini seconded. The agenda was approved as presented with no addendum.

D. Items of Business

1. ASD Academic Update

President Croft, Superintendent Graff, Chief Financial Officer Mark Foster, and Ms. von Imhof gave the ASD presentation.

The public hearing on the District proposed increase in the upper limit budget authority to allow the District to use its new local, State and Federal funding opportunities is slated for Tuesday, June 24th. President Croft thanked the Assembly for their continued support of local education and highlighted how ASD will invest the funding anticipated in fiscal year 2014-15.

In May, the Assembly reaffirmed its full support of the School District under the State Public School Funding Formula and discontinued the practice of billing the District for police officers with offices in the local schools. The District is investing those resources in direct classroom instruction in the form of 86 certificated teachers in classrooms across Anchorage schools allocated on an enrollment driven model.

Mr. Croft highlighted the results for two schools (Alpenglow and Ravenwood) (that Mr. Starr had asked about specifically) to illustrate how teachers are distributed to schools. If an influx of new students arrives, the District can reallocate teachers to meet the actual enrollment that materializes in the fall.

Ms. Johnston and Mr. Croft discussed the allocation of teachers driven by numbers (same equation across district); decisions are based on enrollment and merits of programs.

Mr. Croft discussed the different ways that State and local government have funded the Anchorage School District; funding from the Municipality was sustainable and used for sustainable investments (ongoing education costs), a large part of the State funding was a three year grant. Grant money should not be used for an ongoing bases, the Board asked the District to create pilot programs (lasting three years) that would have the most impact on student performance (pre-K and third grade literacy). Ms. von Imhof and Mr. Croft discussed the pilot programs; the District will study, collect data, and report on the pilot programs over the next three years to document (be able to show) where the greatest return on investment has been.

Ms. Johnston asked about the administrative cost of the pilot programs. Mr. Foster responded that the District is going to absorb the administrative costs into existing programs; none of the three year grant money awarded by the state will be used for administrative costs.

Ms. Johnston, Superintendent Graff, and Mr. Croft discussed preschool programs; availability, effectiveness, and comparison to private programs. There are many programs that identify themselves as preschool in the private sector that are substantially different that what the District offers; the District has certificated teachers and has adopted researched based curriculum with professional development for teachers. Superintendent Graff added that the district is focusing on building relationships with community partnerships, trying to align resources and practices, making a significant difference for students.

Ms. Johnston asked about the Migrant Education preschool program. Superintendent Graff responded that the Migrant Education preschool program merged what they were doing (from government funds) with the three year grant (state) opportunity.

Mr. Steele and Mr. Croft discussed the pilot programs; the board made an intentional decision to place the programs in certain schools, losing some equality but gaining data on the pilot programs (evaluating if they are effective or not). Mr. Steele spoke about how tracking specific data could help the Anchorage community and beyond with development of other private preschool programs and added that the pilot programs (pre school and 3rd grade literacy) will have a positive impact.

Mr. Graff continued with the power point presentation.

The add back of 86 classroom teachers with the new local support will enable the District to continue to build on the success of its initiatives to invest in quality teachers and quality instruction so teachers can continue to provide excellent instruction to ASD students.

Three years ago, the District undertook an initiative to reinvest in differentiated instructional methods using a leading system for integrating evaluations, assessments and data driven feedback on individual students to allow teachers to tightly tailor their instructional efforts to meet the needs of their students. The system is called "Response to Instruction" or RTI. As ASD continues to study, train and implement the system across the District, we are pleased to report the renewed focus on systematic data-driven differentiated instruction is paying dividends. The District is continuing to see sustained improvement in student proficiency and performance in math, reading and writing. Mr. Graff reviewed the gains the District is making in some of this year's preliminary data from state assessments.

Ms. Johnston asked about the principal at Tyson Elementary School (commenting, he is successful with RTI programs) and if there were site based management systems? Mr. Graff spoke about the successes at Tyson, the administration is analyzing and using data from Tyson Elementary and noted it is the kind of model the District is looking at to duplicate with pilot programs.

Mr. Flynn and Mr. Graff discussed the student data (results/gains) from the presentation slides.

Mr. Croft spoke about the ongoing debate on how to measure student performance; proficiency or growth. He added there is worry in the philosophy if only proficiency is judged, do the students improve or just stay proficient? Ms. Agosti-Gisler shared an example of her time as a teacher working with at-risk students; improving their reading three grade levels but they would still not be considered proficient for their age (improvement versus proficiency).

Ms. von Imhof, Mr. Croft, and Mr. Graff discussed Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the new State Standards. The District has adopted the CCSS which are close to the State Standards but not identical. The State of Alaska is developing Alaska Measures of Progress (AMP) through the University of Kansas, the District does not know what measures are going to be used for the assessments making it difficult to compare Alaska students to the national "norm". Ms. Johnston asked if the District is able to "opt out" of the State Standards because of the adoption of the CCSS? Mr. Croft responded that the District has opted out of the State Standards but is not able to opt out of the State testing.

Mr. Foster continued the presentation. He spoke about the challenges of the three year state funding (HB278), and the long term picture of what is sustainable; the overall trend over the prior three years and the flat funding outlook for the following two years followed by a decline in FY1718 continues to present substantial risks to the District's momentum. As a result of the limited sustainability of the State funding with a significant drop off in FY1718, the District is investing the new State support in promising three year pilot programs. The District will monitor and manage those pilots and report back their results to help demonstrate to the Governor, Legislature, Mayor, Assembly and public that the District is continuing to make smart investments that get results.

Mr. Graff discussed the pilot programs, Pre-K success and the importance of early literacy. In 2014-15 ASD will have 53 Preschool classrooms: 38 Special Education and 15 General Education (of those 15 General Education classrooms, three are operated through community partnerships with Kids' Corps, Inc. Headstart. ELL preschool classrooms are included in this 15). Students in ASD preschool classrooms are showing significant gains in achievement.

Mr. Graff reviewed assessment scores for students in Title I schools, where a majority of students are identified as economically disadvantaged. Economically disadvantaged students who participated in ASD Title I pre-k programs showed significantly higher achievement scores than their peers who didn't attend preschool. In order to build on this foundation of success, the District is adding 4 pre-kindergarten classrooms this coming school year, and also working to expand pre-k partnerships with community organizations so that all children will start school ready for kindergarten.

Mr. Croft and Ms. Johnston asked about the Kids' Corps Headstart compared to ASD operated preschools, and asked for comparison cost and data.

Ms. Johnston asked if the District was tracking attendance is preschool. Mr. Graff responded yes.

Mr. Graff continued the presentation. Intensive support is needed in the critical, early years of school. Smaller class sizes are critical to build the foundation for our youngest students. ASD is directing resources to early literacy by adding 16 teachers to hold class size in grades Kindergarten, first and second grade. ASD is also bringing on early literacy coaches, 12 teacher experts will provide direct support and intervention at targeted schools to early readers and help coach other educators and parents to improve student reading and literacy. He highlighted the success at Tyson Elementary which has both a Title I coach and a building literacy coach; noting that when resources are provided to schools and students, they are achieving.

ASD is improving professional development to teachers, this helps them improve their practices and it also creates better alignment in what's being taught across the district. Just after school got out, 200 teachers participated in the ASD Summer Academy. This is a week-long opportunity for teachers to get additional training in a variety of subjects. In addition to the adoption of the new standards, ASD is expanding Advanced Placement professional development activities for teachers throughout Anchorage in all subject areas.

This year, two ASD high schools with high military populations (Bartlett and Eagle River), participated in a grant received by the National Math and Science Initiative. It focused primarily on providing high-quality professional development for AP and Pre-AP teachers in math and science but also include language arts due the critical literacy skills needed to be successful in the advanced STEM subjects. Participating in the NMSI project helped ASD develop the structure and framework to build our capacity districtwide for expanded AP course delivery.

The District was able to have more than 200 high school AP teachers and middle school Pre-AP teachers participate in a training from The College Board. This is the national organization that develops all AP classes throughout the country (they recently revised all of their AP course requirements). ASD also welcomed in about 50 non-ASD teachers from around the state to participate in the training.

Beginning this school year, ASD will be using some funding to improve teacher training and evaluation through instructional tours at several schools districtwide. Job-embedded professional learning gives educators an opportunity to see high-quality instruction first-hand (teachers observing teachers).

The Anchorage School District has adopted new teacher performance standards. The Danielson Frameworks for Teaching is an evidence based framework that focuses on effective teaching, which is aligned to four domains: Planning and Preparation, Classroom Environment, Instruction, and Professional Responsibilities. Teachers and principals have been receiving professional development and training in the new frameworks this year, teachers will be evaluated utilizing the new frameworks next year (student learning data will become part of the evaluation process beginning in 2015-2016).

Ms. von Imhof spoke about the need to support teachers with good curriculum. ASD is revamping the K-8 science curriculum (current curriculum is over 20 years old). Through the curriculum refresh, content will be infused with current science, technology, engineering and math instructional units as well as integrate science and technology instruction with language arts. These refurbished science kits will provide hands-on science for students. Ms. von Imhof discussed classroom technology, connectivity, online testing, technology grants, and Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) in the classroom (appropriate times for using).

Mr. Steele asked about the equality of technology (not all homes have the capacity), and students having access. Mr. Graff and Ms. Plunkett spoke about the BYOD program in schools (their observations); devices are available in classrooms and students are working together (sharing devices). Students have connectivity in the classrooms, if not available at home; work can be done in school, notes can be used, the library also has broadband available (hot spots around town).

Ms. Agosti-Gilser discussed working with School Business Partner (SBP), Rotary International; they refurbish computers, teach parents how to use the computer, deliver to homes and set them up (parents still have to have connectivity).

Ms. Johnston asked about ASD having "magnet libraries" with extended hours, IT support, located on bus routes. Mr. Graff responded that there are a couple of locations that have 21st Century Grant support with extended learning, access ability to resources, and are located in areas with a greater population of economically disadvantaged students.

Mr. Foster continued with the presentation and spoke about charter school allocations. HB 278 required the District to make adjustments in its allocations to charter schools which in turn required adjustments in special needs program support and assessments, the net effect of those adjustments will increase funding for: special needs programs (Special Education, English Language Learners, Gifted instruction, Native Education and Vocational/Career and Technical Education) by \$1.3 million [based on a four year sustainability analysis]; facilities based charter schools by \$4.2 million [including \$1.3 million in a one-time supplement from the District to help charter schools support special needs students]; and Correspondence charter schools by \$1.9 million.

Ms. Johnston asked if the new funding encourages or discourages charter schools from utilizing shared space with existing ASD buildings. Mr. Graff responded that the District has reached out to charter and correspondence schools to start this conversation (sharing space). Mr. Croft noted that the funding releases some of the pressure on charters (for facilities) but it is still there, and added that the Board has had discussions with the charters regarding bonding for facilities.

Mr. Flynn spoke about excess capacity (within existing ASD buildings) and driving toward higher utilization of those facilities rather than creating tax exemptions or new bonding. Mr. Graff and Mr. Flynn discussed charter schools located within neighborhood schools.

Mr. Croft stated that the Board had a work session with the charter schools, discussing a "charter bill of rights", policy revisions (right to be in schools), bonding, allegations of excess space (some schools/classrooms miscalculated), dividing up programs, placing charters where it "makes sense", enrollment, and boundary changes.

Mr. Higgins stated that charter schools are a complex issue. He talked about capacity and expanding pre-K (taking up capacity), and how to make charters more accessible to individuals without picking one location (dependent on transportation). Mr. Higgins expressed concern about safety; schools are built to safety standards, other buildings are not (where charters might be located).

Mr. Steele noted that charter school facilities have to meet the same standards as ASD schools so for the Assembly, this should not be that much of a problem. He discussed shifting boundaries to free up a school (for a charter) and added that the public resents boundary changes.

Ms. von Imhof discussed capacity in schools, demographic studies, the middle school study that is coming out (7-8 or 6-8), and perhaps looking at school boundaries.

Mr. Traini asked if charter schools were required to take a certain percent of special needs students with the State money that was given (for special needs). Mr. Croft and Mr. Graff responded; there is no requirement (percentage) for special needs students in charter schools, most charters have significantly less special needs students (AK Native Charter being the exception, it is much like neighborhood schools in terms of diversity). There was a discussion with charters (work session) regarding the 20% for special needs and sharing those funds as the district supports special needs students districtwide wherever (which school) they are.

Mr. Traini commented that exclusion of special needs students may be going on at some charters. Mr. Graff responded that the expectation is that all students have the right to participate in the lottery and that charter schools cannot exclude students based on special needs. For the needs of any student, families should look at where services are offered and how they are provided, all services are not provided at each school (neighborhood or charter). Mr. Perez-Verdia and Mr. Peterson discussed charter schools having specific philosophies and structure (way of functioning), families of special needs students may not put in for the lottery (charter may not be able to provide services) or realize that students' needs cannot be met once they start attending the charter and then moving to neighborhood school that offers services.

Mr. Croft and Mr. Graff discussed transportation for charter schools. Historically, families of students that attend charter and optional schools have provided their own transportation. With the passing of SB278, there is an expectation for the District to provide transportation services for charter schools within the existing route that is already there (this may help with some disadvantages students).

Ms. Agosti-Gisler, Mr. Graff, and Mr. Abbott spoke about the pilot program with the People Mover Bus system, providing transportation for students and staff at East High School. Student and staff IDs are used for bus passes on any regular People Mover Bus route, a program that was coordinated with People Mover by Ms. von Imhof, Ms. Johnston, and Mr. Abbott (\$30,000 for a one year test). If the program is successful, ASD is considering the program for other locations (schools). People Mover will soon have software to track buses and plan routes available. It was noted that this program will be beneficial for students with before and after school activities, or students needing to stay after school to utilize technology.

Mr. Hall talked about the difficult job the school district faces; with 43,000 families in the community, not everyone will be satisfied and many people have different ideas on how money should be spent. He complimented the Board and District for what they are doing and commented on the pilot projects. Mr. Croft and Ms. Agosti-Gisler appreciated the comments and funding from the Municipality, they spoke about communication and transparency with the public, municipality and state.

Mr. Hall and Ms. Johnston discussed the HSGQE and NCLB programs in regards to funding and effectiveness.

Mr. Foster discussed the State funding, a modest amount that will help in the next year but will not prevent staffing reductions. He reviewed the projected cuts for the upcoming years with no new revenue. He noted that it has been suggested that ASD adjust salaries and wages to help balance the budget; Mr. Foster stated that ASD is not attracting and retaining teachers with the salaries it has now, particularly in the Special Education Department.

Ms. Johnston asked about job sharing with Special Education teachers (has heard teachers not able to job share any longer). Mr. Graff spoke about an insurance eligibility change in the new teacher contract (.75 versus .50 FTE). Ms. Johnston suggested that job sharing may interest some teachers even with no benefits. Mr. Perez-Verdia added that there may be requirements to Special Education specifically (regarding job sharing). Mr. Foster noted that he would get a specific response for Ms. Johnston after reviewing the contract and Affordable Health Care Act.

Mr. Steele asked how ASD is dealing with growing health care costs. Mr. Foster responded that ASD is continuing to negotiate aggressively in the bargaining process for cost sharing; the current teacher contract includes "frozen contributions". In addition, ASD is working with private sector and larger (and legislative) structure.

Ms. von Imhof and Mr. Croft discussed health care costs in Alaska and cooperating (joining with) other larger employers to bring down costs.

Mr. Graff spoke about the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), a federal reimbursement program for school meals. CEP designation is determined based on the percentage of economically disadvantaged students at each school. The goal of CEP is to improve access to meals in eligible high-poverty schools and eliminates the need for families to complete lengthy paperwork. Currently, ASD receives reimbursement to feed students at 20 schools at no-charge to the student, through CEP, an additional 10 schools, around 3,500 students, will be able to benefit from this program. CEP will not create an additional cost to ASD, rather ASD will generate an additional \$2.7 million in reimbursement for meals. Once program expenses are covered, Student Nutrition will prioritize additional revenue to purchase higher-quality products for students districtwide. The CEP will provide much higher quality and locally grown product, will reduce paperwork, and simplify the process. States piloting CEP have seen significant increases in attendance rates at elementary schools, and notable increases at secondary schools.

Mr. Croft and Ms. Agosti-Gisler spoke about the CEP model, efficiency (reducing paperwork), the core mission being education (feeding all students), safety and security (less students leaving campus).

Mr. Traini appreciated the CEP program at East, treating everyone the same and feeding all the students.

Ms. Johnston likes the model, but asked about statistics and data collection to measure poverty levels. Mr. Croft noted that the board has discussed effective data collection and eligibility. Mr. Foster added that the reporting to the state is a compliance filing (categorizing economically disadvantaged), not necessarily measuring performance; ASD is continuing conversations with the state on how they present their data.

Mr. Graff concluded the presentation and spoke about a focus on educating all students for life. Anchorage remains a statewide leader in local support of education, he thanked the Assembly for their continued support.

Mr. Graff invited the Assembly members to attend the State of the Schools address on July 25th at 8 am at East High School, the address will focus on where ASD is and where it is going.

Mr. Graff spoke about a pre K study that gives a broader perspective; the study takes a look at a combination of different studies (a long term looks at students at end of their high school careers). Students who participated in pre K show greater success compared to the group who did not attend pre K. Mr. Croft asked that the study be sent to the Board and Assembly.

Mr. Foster reviewed three appendices distributed at the meeting; staffing trends, elementary teacher allocations, and a 2014-15 Pro Forma review. One of the fundamental financial challenge for ASD is the ability to attract and retain staff, the cost of housing continues to increase in Anchorage (losing the "race" to Kenai and the Mat-Su Valley in these areas). He encouraged talking with legislators regarding the cost of living in Anchorage. Mr. Croft added that Anchorage has been the "base" for a long time (regarding the BSA), and that this may no longer be appropriate.

Ms. Gray-Jackson appreciated the presentation from the Board and Administration, and feels they are doing a fabulous job.

Mr. Peterson asked if there were any projections on what effect on graduation rates not having the HSGQE will have. Mr. Graff responded that since the inception of the HSGQE, 1000 students have not received diplomas. There will be financial, emotional, and instructional benefits to removing the HSGQE requirement (also increased opportunities for students). He added that RTI is a much more relevant system for assessing students and is done from Kindergarten on (earlier interventions).

Mr. Perez-Verdia discussed the HSGQE going away, benefits and concerns. He added that with the increased standards and rigor (with Common Core State Standards that have been adopted by ASD), will ensure that students who graduate from high school in Anchorage are far more prepared (graduation is one of the biggest indicators for success in life). Mr. Croft discussed why graduation numbers may change with the significant raise in standards.

Ms. Agosti-Gisler noted that the Board's Annual Legislative Luncheon will take place on November 6th.

Mr. Steele expressed how well the Board and District are doing in terms of realistically looking at challenges. He congratulated Ms. Davis (former Senator) on all her hard work and the repeal of the HSGQE.

Mr. Croft thanked the Assembly for their appreciation and thanked them for their support.

E. Comments

1. Comments

There were no additional comments.

F. Schedule of Upcoming Joint Meeting(s)

1. September 19, 2014 -10:00am- 12:00pm @ City Hall

2. December 12, 2014 - 10:00am - 12:00pm @ ASD

G. Adjournment

1. Adjournment

With no objections, President Croft adjourned the Joint Meeting at 11:55 am.