

# GALENA CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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**SUPERINTENDENT**  
Jim Merriner



November 15, 2018

Dear GCSGD Families and Community Members:

The holiday season fast approaches and, with it, the end of the first semester. I hope you enjoy this time of year with your friends and loved ones as we give thanks for our blessings. I hope, too, that you will enjoy the following update on some district initiatives.

First, celebration of GCSGD enrollment growth is in order. October 1 to October 26 was the critical “count period” for school funding for all Alaskan districts. This four-week window determines each district’s Average Daily Membership (ADM). GCSGD submitted our district enrollment summary on November 7, 2018 with a total enrollment of 4,842.59 for this school year. This 389.04 above last school year constitutes 8.74% in enrollment growth from the 2017-18 school year. While many factors play into this significant enrollment increase, GCSGD’s continued customer service emphasis ... always providing our partner stakeholders exceptional service ... remains a critical piece of GCSGD success. GCSGD knows that parents/guardians can choose any one of a host of educational options across Alaska. GCSGD strives for each GCSGD employee to give 100% effort while helping our parents/guardians and our students succeed in the educational scenario that best works for that family. Kudos to the entire GCSGD family for our healthy partnerships that contribute to our continued growth.

Second, GCSGD is beginning our budget preparations for the 2019-20 school year. The GCSGD Budget Review Committee plans to reconvene its work starting in December. During this upcoming budget planning cycle for the 2019-20 school year, GCSGD will need to continue to account for, in addition to relentless inflationary increases, the recent Board-approved three-year Collective Bargaining Agreement that increases expenses for classified employees and the City of Galena’s planned increases to utility expenses for the 2018-19, 2019-20, and 2020-21 school years. Also, this coming spring GCSGD enters negotiations with our certificated instructors. As stated above, GCSGD’s enrollment has grown substantially during the last year. However, the additional monies the district will receive for our increased enrollment may not completely address the increased costs that the district is expecting to incur. We will all need to be proactive in our financial planning to ensure that the district remains fiscally sound.

Third, GCSGD plans to address two major areas with the legislature during the spring legislative session, which is predicted, once again, to be a precarious session for educational funding.

- While the legislature, during last spring’s session, provided some additional funding, which falls outside of the Base Student Allocation (BSA) foundation funding formula, for


the 2019-20 school year, the increase falls short of addressing the lost fiscal ground districts endured during a number of years of “flat funding.” The BSA is the amount of monies the district receives for each student enrolled with our district. Additionally, the stipend for each student attending GILA, our nine-month residential boarding school in Galena, has been “flat funded” since 2014. GCSD has begun conversations with legislators and other politically connected Alaskans in order to lay the groundwork for potentially increasing revenues for Alaska’s boarding schools.

- Additionally, GCSD will lobby the legislature for some monies for the Department of Education and Early Development’s Major Maintenance and School Construction Priority Lists. GCSD understands Alaska’s current fiscal conundrum; however, annually addressing some of these major maintenance and school construction issues ultimately saves monies because of inflationary realities on deferred projects. On Monday, November 5, DEED published its FY20 Capital Improvement Projects Major Maintenance Grant funding priority rankings. Out of 72 ranked projects from school districts across Alaska, GCSD’s Composite building renovation project was ranked #2 with \$4,866,353 in state funding and \$256,124 in matching GCSD funds. So ... if the legislature provides 12.3 million in major maintenance funding, our Composite renovation will proceed. Since we will not know until the end of the legislative session in late April/early May 2019 about this funding, I do not foresee work to start on this until the spring/summer of 2020.

Fourth, you might enjoy reading about yours truly and the Galena City School District in a national publication ... <https://www.harvardmagazine.com/2018/11/alaskan-educator>. Hopefully you will walk away from that reading knowing a bit more about me and why I am passionate about and proud of every GCSD program. There is a second photograph if you click on the small white arrow located above Daniel Kopp’s shoulder.

In closing, GCSD delights to serve all of our new and returning families and students. Please contact me at the phone number above or the email address below if you would like to discuss any aspect of this letter in greater detail or if you would like more information on any district initiative. I welcome any opportunity to visit in depth about the exciting work that we are doing within our district.

Respectfully yours,



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