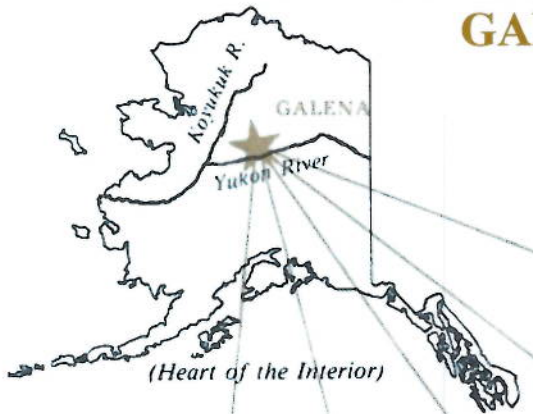


GALENA CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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SUPERINTENDENT
Jim Merriner



April 18, 2019

Dear GCSD Families and Community Members:

Diamonds, in addition to being a girl's best friend, are April's birthstone. One of the hardest substances known, the word diamond originates from the early Greek word *adamas*. No surprise, then, that folks are *adamant* about getting that diamond wedding ring. (Right about now my kids' eye-rolling would start.)

GCSD recently completed administering the PEAKS (Performance Evaluation for Alaska's Schools) state required assessments. Results from this third iteration of the PEAKS assessments, which we will see this coming fall, ought to begin showing GCSD student learning trends. Because only 22% of IDEA students took PEAKS last spring and our IDEA participation rate appears to have remained low this year, I recommend caution next fall about drawing too many conclusions for IDEA as a whole because the PEAKS results will not include the majority of IDEA testing-age students. Please also remember that we ought to consider PEAKS assessment data alongside GCSD's other student learning data resources: Achieve3000, STAR Math/Reading, PSAT, SAT/ACT, WorkKeys, and individual student coursework.

One of the core services IDEA provides our families and other homeschool/correspondence families around Alaska are our IDEA Curriculum Fairs. IDEA annually hosts curriculum fairs in Kenai, Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau. These fairs are a great resource for our IDEA homeschool families to explore curricula options for their students (over 60 curricula vendors will be available), to network with other homeschool families, and to engage in presentations from leaders within the homeschool market. I would encourage you to visit one of these premier Alaskan events serving homeschool parents or parents contemplating homeschooling.

- Soldotna – Tues, April 23, 2019
- Anchorage – Wednesday-Thursday, April 24-25, 2019
- Fairbanks – Friday, April 26, 2019
- Juneau – Monday, April 29, 2019

GCSD's graduation ceremonies fast approach. These celebratory and momentous events provide a venue for GCSD to honor our students and their families for their academic accomplishments and to thank our students and families for allowing us the privilege of supporting their academic interests. If you see me at one of these happy occasions (I am able to attend all but two), please feel free to introduce yourself. I would appreciate the chance to thank you for allowing GCSD to partner with you in the education of your child(ren).

- Region SE (Juneau): May 13 @ 6:00 PM
- Region MS (Wasilla): May 16 @ 2:00 PM

- Region F (Fairbanks): May 17 @ 6:00 PM
- Region K (Kenai): May 18 @ 2:00 PM
- Region A (Anchorage): May 21 @ 4:00 PM

On September 1, 2018, GCSD successfully submitted an application to the Department of Education & Early Development's (DEED) Major Maintenance Capital Improvement Project grant program for potential funding to renovate the aged GILA Composite building into a state-of-the-art instructional facility. In November, GCSD learned that the Composite project was ranked #2 out of 72 submitted projects. Governor Dunleavy's proposed FY20 (July 1, 2019-June 30, 2020) only funds the #1 ranked project. I sent letters to key legislators in March advocating that the legislature provide enough funding for both the #1 and #2 ranked projects. Fingers crossed. If not funded this legislative session, GCSD will submit another application on September 1, 2019 and hopefully end up ranked #1 during next spring's legislative session.

If you remember from my February letter, Governor Dunleavy's proposed FY20 budget would cut GCSD's state funding by almost 20% or \$5 million. Recently, the House passed its version of the FY20 operating budget. Below is the House's conclusion regarding FY20 K-12 education funding:

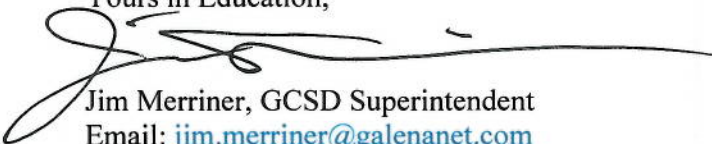
- Keep the one-time FY20 \$30 million (outside the Foundation Formula/Base Student Allocation) funding that the legislature passed last session and that Governor Walker signed into law last summer.
- Flat fund for FY20 the Foundation Formula/BSA and Student Transportation.
 - While this is a cut because of continued inflation, it certainly is not the unprecedented cut proposed by Governor Dunleavy.
- Flat fund for FY21 the Foundation Formula/BSA and Student Transportation.
 - Another cut because of continued inflation.

Once passed by the House, the Senate receives the operating budget for consideration. Most likely, a conference committee between House and Senate leadership will eventually determine what is mutually agreeable for both bodies to send to the Governor for signature or veto. Alaskans concerned about K-12 education funding might want to consider contacting legislators to share thoughts. If you decide to do so and would like help locating contact phone numbers, email addresses, etc., please feel free to reach out to me or to another GCSD administrator.

While difficult in light of the fiscal uncertainty, GCSD continues developing our FY20 budget. GCSD plans to continue budgeting conservatively in order to maintain a healthy fund balance for contingencies. In light of almost assured flat funding (a cut because of inflationary pressures) in coming years, I recommend that our stakeholders prepare for tighter GCSD budgets. I trust that we will remain open for discussions on how best GCSD can maximize the funding available to meet the learning needs of each of our students.

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.

Yours in Education,



Jim Merriner, GCSD Superintendent
 Email: jim.merriner@galenanet.com