

Unknown

From: Palin, Sarah (GOV sponsored) [govpalin@alaska.gov]
Sent: Monday, October 15, 2007 5:33 PM
To: Leschper; Beth (GOV); 'fek9wnr@yahoo.com'
Cc: Tibbles; Michael A (GOV); Perry; Kristina Y (GOV); Mason; Janice L (GOV); Leighow; Sharon W (GOV)
Subject: Re: Remarks for Secondary Principals Conference 10 16 (tomorrow)

Todd would you print off on home pc so i can look over?

----- Original Message -----

From: Leschper, Beth (GOV)
To: Palin, Sarah (GOV sponsored)
Cc: Tibbles, Michael A (GOV); Perry, Kristina Y (GOV); Mason, Janice L (GOV); Leighow, Sharon W (GOV)
Sent: Mon Oct 15 17:25:19 2007
Subject: Remarks for Secondary Principals Conference 10 16 (tomorrow)

41st Annual Fall Principals Conference, October 14-16

Sponsored by the Alaska Associations of Elementary and Secondary Principals

Conference Theme: Comprehensive School Improvement (CSI): Alaska

10 a.m. Sheraton Hotel

It is an honor to welcome all of you – our elementary and secondary principals. It is exciting to see so many of Alaska's educational leaders together learning new strategies to improve our schools.

Your leadership is making a real difference in Alaska's schools.

There is no question, we are all faced with significant challenges when it comes to improving our schools. Some of the concerns I hear all across our state are (1) the impact of skyrocketing retirement costs, (2) the high cost of energy and (3) the inability of our districts to effectively plan with unpredictable levels of state support.

I am working hard to address these issues. Last year, I called on the Legislature to pass an early education funding bill. Although we were not successful, we were able to make education a priority by placing \$1 Billion into the Education Fund.

The Legislative Education Funding Task Force has met and generated 18 recommendations. In order to give our districts the ability to better plan and budget for their programs, I again commit to working with the Legislature to adopt changes to our statutory foundation program early next session.

Some of the changes in the report that I am particularly interested are:

1. Updating our district cost factors to recognize the higher costs of providing education in many areas of our state
2. Increasing funding for students with intensive needs, so that our students who experience medical or other special circumstances can become successful in school and in life, and
3. Increasing the Base Student Allocation in future years.

Last year, the State contributed a significant amount to help local school districts and municipalities with increasing retirement costs. Although we're still working on our state budget for the next fiscal year, it will reflect my continuing support to fund the TRS and PERS shortfalls, so that school districts can focus on the educational needs of students.

We have implemented, and continue to add, many initiatives that will help disengaged students become active participants in their education. It's vital that our students are able to take their place in our economy and share in Alaska's future. Our children are our greatest resource.

In the near future, 3 out of 4 jobs in America will require some training after high school. Increasingly, the skills required for entry-level jobs are similar to the skills needed to enter college.

Our goal is that more students will graduate from high school and will do so prepared to transition to many different opportunities in the workforce or postsecondary education.

We are beginning a program, called Work Ready/College Ready, to help prepare students for college or the workplace. It offers students and adult job-seekers the opportunity to assess and improve their skills in three areas that are important to the workplace and post-secondary education: reading for information, applied math, and locating information in graphic formats.

The online program is free to users, self-paced, and targeted to participants' needs. The curriculum and assessments are delivered in the context of work situations in fields in which students are interested.

Students will be able to document their skills in a nationally recognized Career Readiness Certificate.

While these initiatives are important, there many more challenges facing us all if we are going to be successful at addressing issues such as our graduation rates.

I will look to you to help provide solutions that can make a difference. I stand ready to work with all of you – and I welcome your new ideas.

Thank you all for the leadership you provide on the front lines of Alaska education.

Beth Leschper

Deputy Communications Director

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