

HOW IS IT I AM GLAD AND MAD?

Dear Steller Families,



And so **WHY
I AM
GLAD!**

First off, giving credit where credit is due - my fellow parent group chair, John Tichotsky, from Denali Montessori Elementary drafted this flyer, provided it to parents at Denali and graciously allowed it to be adapted and distributed at Steller.

On March 1st, I participated in Anchorage School District's Assets Fair along with John. I attended as the representative for Steller at this gathering, which focused on the values of Social and Emotional Learning. As one of only a few parents among hundreds of ASD staff, I was able to observe what teachers, counselors, nurses and other school staff members really thought about their work with our children. (What follows are John's comments, which I share.)

I was very impressed by the commitment of our school district's teachers and administrators. They are hard-working and genuinely love and care for our children. They are idealistic and visionary in their hopes, but very grounded and realistic in their approaches. They see social and emotional learning as a key platform for academic success. It isn't rocket science -

if you feel joy and safety, you are ready and able to learn and be a self-directed individual.

The conference reaffirmed the importance of the role of parents in student success. We need to help our students with homework (when asked), we need to work with them, and we need to have meals and fun with our children. Positive routine and ritual is a key to a healthy lifestyle.

One speaker reported that recent studies show that children who experience emotional and/or physical trauma lose an average of 17 years from their life expectancy! This is a greater reduction in life expectancy than results from smoking or obesity. Let's make sure our kids feel loved and are safe. By spending positive time with them and letting them know that you love them and they are safe actually gives them a better chance for a long life - supported by research!

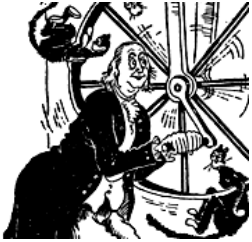


**WHY
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Meanwhile, forces outside our school will deprive our children the resources they need to sustain emotional and social learning, as well as academic learning.

Our State has the resources to support our educational needs. The price of oil hasn't dipped below \$100 for several months. We need to make sure that monies are allocated to support schools all over Alaska.

If we aren't willing to value our children highly and spend money on quality education – what message are we sending our children? It is patriotic to support education. Benjamin Franklin said, “the only



thing more expensive than education is ignorance.” This wisdom is a pillar of our common culture as Americans, and certainly it is our common culture as Alaskans and

Anchorageites.

If we don't act our school will suffer. If we don't get our school budget funded we will have larger class sizes, elementary schools will lose one-half of their counselor position's time to another school, and receive reduced or no support for various programs.

Bills

There is a Bill in the Alaska State Legislature under the title of *Senate Bill 171 - An Act increasing the base student allocation used for public school funding; and providing for an effective date.*

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_bill.asp?bill=SB%20171

It would add almost \$10 million dollars to our district's budget and go a long way to reduce the need to cut and deprive our children.

Bonds

There are School Bond Propositions in the Anchorage Municipal Election scheduled for April 3, 2012. School Bond Proposition 1 includes \$600,000 for Steller's heating and air handling system. As, we know, this is something that needs improvement.

What can you do?

Bills - The House is in its final weeks of deliberating on this issue, so input is critical. They aren't actively considering SB171 this week but are focused on the concept of an increase to the base student allocation.

Send letters to the Legislature. Your letters should be addressed to the Speaker of the House and sent as an email attachment (this way they have to open the letter and print it and not just count it as an email), although an email often goes to their cell phones and is opened by the legislator themselves, so that is still an option. Address them to:

Speaker of the House
([Representative Mike Chenault@legis.state.ak.us](mailto:Representative_Mike_Chenault@legis.state.ak.us))

And send Copies:

Majority Leader
([Representative Alan Austerman@legis.state.ak.us](mailto:Representative_Alan_Austerman@legis.state.ak.us))
Chair of Education
([Representative Alan Dick@legis.state.ak.us](mailto:Representative_Alan_Dick@legis.state.ak.us))
Co-Chairs of Finance
([Representative Bill Stoltze@legis.state.ak.us](mailto:Representative_Bill_Stoltze@legis.state.ak.us)
and
[Representative Bill Thomas@legis.state.ak.us](mailto:Representative_Bill_Thomas@legis.state.ak.us))

Feel free to copy Steller via the website webmaster address:

webmaster@stellerschool712.org

Please send the legislators an email. You can use the example below:

Dear Speaker,

I strongly support an increase in the Base Student Allocation (also in SB 171 passed by the Senate) for all students in Alaska.

SB171 represents a very modest increase to educational spending, less even than inflation for the next three years, but means counselors, librarians and critical programs are not cut from our schools.

Alaska school districts need predictable funding to keep making achievement gains. One-year “fixes” create uncertainty. As you attempt to provide the oil industry tax stability, be assured that similar stability for education is necessary.

Education spending reduces dropout rates and increases graduation rates. In many schools, if the proposed cuts are implemented, children would risk losing significant support in maintaining a safe environment. This will impact children’s chances for success in academics.

The Base Student Allocation is an efficient mechanism to get money directly to the classroom, since it is directly connected to the number of students served.

Sincerely,

YOUR NAME

You can mail letters to:

Name of Legislator
State Capitol
Juneau AK, 99801

You will have to follow up to make sure that the Governor signs the bill, if it passes. I will write to remind you. These letters would serve to get the Governor to sign the bill should it pass the legislature. (sean.parnell@alaska.gov) and his Chief of Staff (mike.nizich@alaska.gov).

Also, send letters to the Editor of the Anchorage Daily News
<http://www.adn.com/help/letters/>

Bonds – Head to the Municipal Election scheduled on April 3, 2012 and remember that School Bond Proposition 1 includes \$600,000 for Steller’s heating and air handling system.

SEL

In addition to the budget issues, let’s talk about how parents can better help the school with social and emotional learning. We volunteer and engage with the school as parents - but we and our children and teachers are facing lots of challenges. There are many things parents can learn so that we are better equipped to help our children and our children’s teachers - and Steller’s staff is ready to engage with us.

Want to know more about SEL and how it affects student success? - Visit casel.org.

While we all have frustration with the recent hard economic times, the lack of money, the lack of time, the additional demands, there are more words of wisdom from Benjamin Franklin, “If we don’t hang together, we shall surely be hanged separately.”

Thank you for taking action for our schools, our children and their future.

Sincerely,

Joe Banta
Steller Parent Group Chair