

MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE



Office of the Mayor

Phone: 907-343-7100

FAX: 907-343-7180

Mayor Dan Sullivan

February 1, 2013

Jim Browder, Ed. D.
Superintendent
Anchorage School District
5530 E. Northern Lights Blvd.
Anchorage, AK 99504-3135

Dear Dr. Browder,

I appreciate your comments in your January 30 letter regarding the Education Summit video. You are correct that it does not, in a few short minutes, portray all the positive and/or negative attributes of the Anchorage School District. The purpose of the video is to simply inform the public that there are significant challenges ahead in the effort to become the best school district in the nation, which was my overreaching goal when convening the summit and my continued goal as we work together to improve student performance.

You are also correct in stating that we had agreed to update the video. I have been waiting for any information/presentations from the district that you felt would be appropriate to include in the video and to date nothing has been forthcoming. I understand that, like myself, you are extremely busy, but I really felt that the ball was in your court to provide the follow up. I apologize if that was a misunderstanding on my part.

As to whether student performance has been inaccurately portrayed, last October, I attended the UAA Education Forum where the data presented regarding state rankings concurred with the data presented by Ms. Haycock at the Summit. Alaska, unfortunately, does indeed rank last in numerous key student performance categories.

You are correct that ASD doesn't mirror those results in all areas. However, that doesn't reduce the scope of our challenge. For example, according to the ASD website, from 2006 to 2011, ASD shows a drop in student proficiency on the SBA's in reading, writing and mathematics, despite significant spending increases over the same period of time. I know you are aware of this and came here to take on that challenge, but over the last decade or so, the community has not been presented with this kind of information.

With all due respect, I disagree with your assessment that providing this information to the community is divisive, in fact I have found the exact opposite. While some may react negatively, many more people are very excited that Anchorage leaders - the Mayor, the Superintendent, school board members, business owners, elected officials and others are willing to tackle the tough job of education reform. The four goals that came out of the summit, which are a key part of the video presentation, show a positive path forward to improve student performance and I think most people have responded to that in a very positive way.

I truly appreciate the job you are doing as Superintendent and I have sung your praises on dozens of occasions during my regular radio reports, during my press briefings when education questions arise and during my public presentations. I have congratulated the district on numerous occasions for their decision to adopt the Common Core standards, since the state proficiency standards are the fifth lowest in the nation. I am indeed pleased with the initiatives that you and the school board are embarking upon and the transparency and honesty that your team has embraced.

I look forward to hearing from you regarding your input into the video and I remain committed to helping you achieve our mutual goal of improving student performance in Anchorage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dan Sullivan".

Dan Sullivan
Mayor

cc: Anchorage School Board
Anchorage Assembly