

**AASB Superintendent Search  
APPLICATION FORM**

If you are applying for more than one position, it is *not* necessary to complete a separate application. If you desire, AASB will duplicate this completed form for any subsequent position applications.

**I. PERSONAL INFORMATION**

Mark Joseph Jenkins

PO Box 5109  
Kongiganak, AK  
99545

(907) 545-3039  
mjenkins19566591@gmail.com

List any other name under which application materials may be received: None

Have you ever been convicted of, or pled guilty to, a misdemeanor or a felony? No

Have you ever been convicted of, or pled guilty to, a DWI? No

**CERTIFICATION**

The superintendent position requires an Alaska Type B certificate with a superintendent endorsement. Do you hold a current Alaska Type B Administrative Certificate with a Superintendent Endorsement?

Yes: No:  I hold a current superintendent certificate from Maine and am in the process of obtaining my Alaska certification

If yes, expiration date is:

If No, have you applied for a Type B certificate with a superintendent endorsement with the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development?

Yes: No:

Information on requirements for the specified certificate may be obtained from:

*Alaska Department of Education & Early Development*  
Teacher Certification  
801 W. 10th, Suite 200  
Juneau, AK 99801-1894  
Tel. 907-465-2857

Alaska law requires at least six semester hours of college academic credit in the last five years in order to receive a Superintendent's Certificate in Alaska. Do you meet these qualifications?

Yes:  No: (Also, I will be taking the required Alaska Studies courses this spring.)

In what other states do you hold a Superintendent's Certificate? Maine

## II. PRESENT EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION

Present Employer: Lower Kuskowkim School District  
 Employer's Address: 1004 Ron Edwards Memorial Dr., Bethel, AK 99559  
 Your Title/Position: Dean of Students  
 # Years in Position: 1st  
 Are you presently under contract? Yes for current year, no for 2017-18  
 Present Salary: \$74,000

Does your employer know of this application? No, but I am not looking to keep things secret. It is early in the hiring season and I will also be looking at LKSD for administrative employment in 2017-18.

## III. EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Please list all FULL TIME experience. List present employment above and all others here, beginning with the most recent, and work backward in chronological order. (Please list on additional sheet if necessary.)

Entries 2 through 6 are in Maine.

			Staff/Students
Aug 2016 to the present	Dean of Students	Ayagina'ar Elitnaurvik Kongiganak, AK 99545	18+/180
Aug 2012/Dec 2015	Superintendent School Union 76	(Brooklin, Sedgwick, and Deer Isle – Stonington CSD) Maine	100+/600
July 2000/Aug 2012	Principal	MSAD #20 Fort Fairfield, Maine	35/350
Aug 1998/June 2000	AP/AD	Oak Hill High School Wales, Maine	40/500
Aug 1995/July 1998	Dir. of Student Services	Maranacook Community School Readfield, Maine	60/750
Aug 1991/July 1995	Teaching Principal	MSAD #77 Machiasport, Maine	12/155
Aug 1987/June 1991	Teacher	Lisbon (NH) Regional School	25/350

Please summarize your work experience in years as applicable: (There is some overlap of years due to shared duties.)

Superintendent	Three and one half
Principal 6-12	Twelve
Principal K-8	Four
Asst. Principal	Five
HS Teacher	Four
MS Teacher	Four

#### IV. EDUCATIONAL HISTORY

*(Please list on additional sheet if necessary.)*

University of Maine	Education Leadership	Various years	30+hours
Plymouth State College (NH)	Education Administration	1989-1992	Masters
University of Maine at Farmington	Secondary Social Studies	1981-1983	Bachelors
University of Southern Maine	History	1978-1981	

#### V. APPLICANT'S STATEMENT

**1. *Philosophy/Orientation:* Summarize your general philosophy of the status of public education in the U.S.-what is working and what challenges lie ahead in the next 10 years, and some of your best ideas for addressing that challenge.**

This is a broad topic, but in a word, I would describe the status of public education in the United States as extremely fluid. I am not sure if education in this country has ever been static or predictable, but it has been more stationary than it is today. The major influences on public education (political, fiscal, and social) are all in flux, and probably will remain so for the foreseeable future.

Consequently, educational leaders need to be exceptionally creative with the management of school districts and highly responsive to the many pressures that are exerted both from within and without. All the while, staying true to the fundamental purpose of public education: Producing involved and competent citizens who are able to pursue their life's goals and ambitions.

Personally, I believe a good deal more is working in our schools than we are given credit for. Public education has been a convenient whipping boy for many groups or segments of society for a number of years. A significant challenge for us is to counter the negative image in a positive and productive manner. I think this is best accomplished at the local level.

A byproduct of all the negativity has been a heightened awareness of the need for accountability, especially with measuring student achievement. I believe the movement toward standards-based education is correct and is a mechanism with which we can reclaim and redirect the conversation to more productive pathways.

**2. *Personnel Management:* Describe your approach to personnel management and your ability to utilize staff effectively.**

I think there are two parts to this answer:

The first is that expectations and responsibilities should be clearly articulated for all district employees. The supervisor or superintendent should initiate regular contact concerning job performance to ensure that everyone, regardless of their role, performs to the best of his or her ability for the sake of the students and the district as a whole.

The second, and by far the more important part, is that it is the superintendent's responsibility to build a climate of collaboration and respect where all employees are expected to contribute to conversations concerning school improvement. It is trite, but true, that none of us are as smart as all of us. Once such a climate has been established, a staff will just take off.

**3. *Fiscal Management:* Appraise your approach to developing a budget, managing budget implementation, and your ability to utilize scarce resources effectively.**

I think you will see a common thread about having as broad a conversation as possible, and including as many different people as possible or practical. This approach promotes a wealth of ideas and knowledge, which coalesce into the best solutions. Budget building is a process, and it is the superintendent's responsibility to set realistic timelines for its development and ensure that they are adhered to.

In my experience, having many people involved with the budget building process leads to enhanced self-discipline on the part of the teachers and principals. They know what the budget represents – in a very big way, they own it. The superintendent must consistently monitor district spending and expect unforeseen circumstances, but it makes his or her job much easier when the above has been accomplished.

I have always worked in school districts that have had scant resources or serious fiscal difficulties. I know how to be frugal and how to manage money, while at the same time making sure that students and educational programs are not short-changed.

**4. *Communications:* Appraise your ability in public speaking, writing, persuasiveness, media relations, and capacity to develop a credible public image. What are your approaches to internal communications? To public communications?**

I may have a slightly different take on this than other applicants. I feel that I am able to write and speak persuasively, and have always maintained my composure and tried to raise the standards of public discourse. "Communication" has taken on a life of its own in the public sector and people too easily lose sight of what is truly important. So I have only ever tried to be myself. I will lay everything out for the world to see and then lead the discussion to what is essential about the work at hand. I do this through openness and honesty, without any hidden agendas or motives. This is true for me regardless of the audience – parents, public, media, or staff.

What I could not do, nor would I do, on my first day as your new superintendent, would be to announce my "master plan" for communication. My plan for communication is considerably more subtle and responsive than that. It is simply to be open, available, and approachable. My door is always open and I enjoy meeting and talking to all types of people.

Internally, I believe it is the responsibility of the professional staff to participate in the discussion. We may work in what appears to be a strict hierarchy, but everyone has a role to play, and no one person or group has all of the answers. It is the primary responsibility of the superintendent to harness all of the talent that is available within a school district and to ensure that the sum of the parts lives up to the potential of the whole.

**5. *Experience with ethnic and cultural groups:* What experiences have you had in working with groups with varied ethnic, cultural and economic backgrounds?**

I have lived and worked in some diverse locations, including Pusan, South Korea, and Savannah, GA, and have enjoyed being among people who come from a different background and culture. I have enjoyed my time living and working in a village in southwest Alaska. I had no idea what to expect when we came here, but I am very glad that we did, as I have gained a great deal from the experience.

Most of my career has been in rural school districts that have significant economic challenges and a split between the haves and the have-nots. Schools should be the great equalizer in our society and a safe place for all students. I have strived to recognize and celebrate differences and have worked to minimize the effects of poverty and other hardships on our students.

**6. *Alaska knowledge and experience:* Describe the nature of your experience in education in Alaska. Explain how this experience and perspective would contribute to your qualifications for this position.**

My experience in Alaska has been of short duration, in a native village, and in one location. I can't claim any great insights based on the last six or seven months. However, I have been a regular reader of the state's newspapers and district websites since before I arrived in Alaska, and I think it would be safe to say that the educational challenges you are facing are not too different than what Maine has faced for many years. In fact, the situations I have read about could easily be about Maine by just changing the place names.

We have family friends from Maine who have made a few trips to Alaska. They have always said Alaska is like Maine, only bigger. I used to take those comments with a grain of salt, but I am gradually coming to realize that Alaska has many similarities to my home state of Maine.

I have always thought that kids are kids and schools are schools wherever you go. Short of being in a big city or an affluent suburb, I have found this to be true. I think that my experiences and perspective speak well to my qualifications to be your next superintendent.

**7. *Educational achievement:* What have you done to upgrade the educational program in schools under your supervision? How have you evaluated the results?**

I believe I have done many things to improve education in the schools under my supervision. The first, and perhaps the most dramatic example, was in four years as the principal of a small K-8 school, reading scores, as measured by the state, went from fourth lowest to state average. I accomplished this by bringing the staff together for a common purpose and ending the practice of allowing each teacher to act as a one-room schoolhouse. The teachers had the ability to teach; my achievement was to harness their efforts. I have drawn upon the power of collaboration wherever I have been an administrator.

Another example was my long tenure as the principal of a middle/high school in Fort Fairfield, Maine. There were numerous collaborative efforts, including the establishment of a true standards-based instructional system. I could write pages on this alone, but perhaps the best evidence was that we were twice cited by US News and World Report as a high-achieving school.

As a superintendent, I was instrumental in introducing and training the staff in the NWEA assessments. We were better able to measure student growth, steer staff development in the direction we wanted to go, and improve instructional practices.

**8. *Labor Relations:* Describe your experiences in the area of labor relations.**

(The following is a piece I wrote a while back. While it does not speak to day-to-day labor relations, it does illustrate my leadership qualities in this area.)

Some background: In anticipation of school consolidation four or five years ago, the six negotiated agreements (three teacher and three support staff) for the districts in Union 76 were written to expire at the same time in June of 2014. The idea was to then write a common teacher contract and a common support staff contract. Previously, two had come up for renegotiation every year on a rotating basis. Well, we all know how consolidation worked out.

Consequently, in my second year as superintendent, I had six contracts and six negotiations to write or facilitate. Two of the three school districts had a difficult history with negotiations. I felt that if I didn't set the tone and insert myself into the process a bit more than they had been used to, the year could be a disaster. I also felt this would be a test of my leadership skills, and if I could pull it off, I would be in a very good position with the three staffs and boards for future efforts.

One clearly stated goal from a management point of view was to write as much common language into the contracts as possible. Having six versions of each section in each of the contracts was a major distraction. One of the associations wanted to get moving, so their representatives, the Uniserve director, and I sat down in the summer of 2013 and began reworking the sections of the contract to make a document that was much more straightforward. We rewrote sections such as Recognition, Negotiation Procedures, Grievance Procedure, Teacher Rights, Complaints, and Management Rights, using pieces of the six contracts within the school union. I knew, and welcomed, that the other five bargaining units were watching.

The next step was to have the representatives from three boards and six units sit down in the same room together and take part in interest-based bargaining training. Given their recent history, some folks from both sides of the table were skeptical, but they all participated. As the six negotiations got underway, they began working from the common language that had been drafted over the summer, with a new willingness to sit, talk, and listen.

The proof was in the results. Not one cross word was spoken during the dozens of sessions. Voluntary concessions were made on both sides, and people were working from a new reality, not just staking out their positions. All six contracts were ratified on the first vote by each board and each of the six bargaining units.

### **9. *Board/superintendent relations: In your view, what is the proper or appropriate relationship between the school board and its superintendent?***

The school board and superintendent have clearly defined statutory, as well practical, roles and responsibilities. Both must respect the role and responsibilities of the other and work in unison to further the work of the district and opportunities for student achievement.

While boards and superintendents have unique responsibilities, they should be mutually supportive and work in tandem to move the school district forward. I could insert any number of textbook answers here, but I have always thought that school boards and superintendents should provide each other with the needed checks and balances, while also acting as a spark or a catalyst.

I have often used the analogy that a school board needs to fly at 30,000 feet. They need to be able to see the big picture in order to paint broad strokes outlining the direction for the district. The superintendent needs to see and appreciate the board's viewpoint, while at the same time translating the board's vision into a working reality. I believe this is fundamental to a good working relationship. Both have jobs to do, and they are not the same jobs. To put it bluntly, a superintendent should never try to usurp the prerogatives of the board, nor should the board unduly interfere with the superintendent's day-to-day running of the district.

A solid working relationship takes time to develop, but a smooth board/ superintendent relationship is essential to having a well-run school district.

**10. *Other:* Any other points or comments you would like to make which could aid in the selection process?**

Your questions cover many topics, and I don't know as I could add anything to the list. I do not like to talk about myself; but I do feel that the combination of who I am as a person, and the way in which I interact with diverse people and situations, make me a natural school administrator. I think I have a knack for bringing people together for the good of the schools. I simply keep asking the questions, how can we do this better, and what can we do to make it work. I am not so naïve to think this works with all people all of the time, but it does tend to marginalize those who stand in the way of progress.

**VI. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Your file with the Association of Alaska School Boards must contain the following items for your candidacy to be considered:

- Formal letter indicating interest in the position
- Completed application
- Confidential placement file (if it is current)
- College transcripts (graduate work in administration only)
- AASB Reference forms (3)
- Alaska Superintendent Certificate (copy)
- Up-to-date Resume
- Other items of your choice
- Photo (optional)

I certify that the foregoing statements are true and correct and authorize you to investigate all references listed and to secure additional information if necessary. I also agree to waive my right to a public discussion of my candidacy as provided in AS 44.62.310©, thereby permitting a board or committee formed by the board to screen application files and/or interview finalists in executive session.

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DATE

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APPLICANT'S SIGNATURE