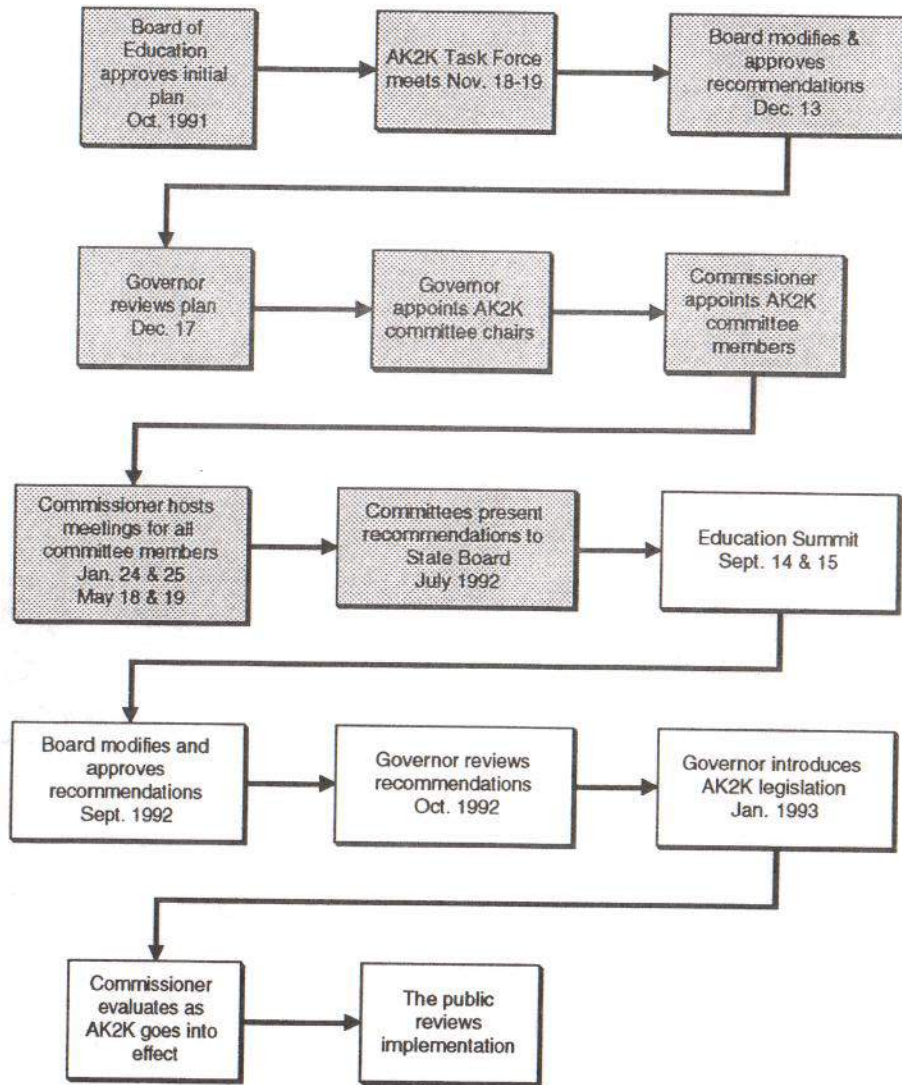


Alaska 2000 -- An Education Initiative



**How Alaskans together
can make their schools
the best in the world.**

KIDS WIN!

Members of the AK2K Task Force, November 1991

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Kids Win! Alaska 2000

● Kids Win!

Kids Win! is the theme of Alaska 2000, an ambitious program to restructure schools for the benefit of our young people.

For a state dedicated to quality education, we have tinkered around the edges of school reform for too long, and too little has changed. To use an aircraft analogy, we have tried to build a better propeller for our airplane when we really need a jet engine.

Alaska 2000 has already involved scores of Alaskans: business people, parents, students, educators, Native leaders and legislators. They helped define the issues and developed recommendations that they believe most Alaskans can support. Our task now is to build a public will for change and carry it through. If we can do that, kids win!

● What is Alaska 2000?

Alaska 2000, AK2K for short, is a plan of action. It is a plan to restructure our public education system. It is not a philosophy, a political platform or another study. We already know many of the problems in our educational system, and we know many of the solutions. AK2K seeks to marshal the support of the public to make our schools everything they should be—the best in the world.

● Why AK2K?

Let's make a list:

- declining scores on standardized tests
- high school drop out rates as high as 25% statewide and as high as 45% for Natives in urban schools
- poor student performance relative to other industrialized nations
- public alienation and dissatisfaction
- the failure of school reform to turn things around fast enough and far enough.

● Education is underfunded, isn't it?

The state spends one-third of its operating budget on education. That's \$800 million. The average classroom teacher in Alaska has nine years of experience and earns \$43,400 annually. The ratio between pupils and classroom teachers is less than 17:1. Alaska spends an average of \$7,000 per pupil annually. This means that each classroom of 25 students represents an operating expenditure of \$175,000 a year. Alaska has been generous in its support of public education.

But more spending does not necessarily lead to better education. Eric Hanushek of the University of Rochester reviewed studies that examined relationships between money and performance, and he concludes: "Expenditures are unrelated to school performance as schools are currently operated." John Chubb of the Brookings Institution and Terry Moe of Stanford University conclude similarly, "There is no connection between school funding and school performance."

● Why aren't our schools doing better?

With excellent teachers, administrators, adequate funding and a concerned public, schools can do better. They are not because the public education system is more focused on process than results, more worried about toeing the line than teaching. In order to reform education, the system must be changed.

Accountability to standards and competition force us all to improve. They create dynamism. As David Boaz of the Cato Institute said: "The people in the public school system aren't necessarily bad people, they are people who face bad incentives. In fact, they have good incentives not to change anything."

Look at the different consequences of failure in the public and private sectors. If you fail in the private sector, you may lose your job or business. In the public sector, if students don't learn or drop out of school—well, what happens? The agency or school gets *more* money. Said Boaz: "Now what kind of incentive structure is that?"

● So what can AK2K do about it?

AK2K's message is, "Let's stop blaming each other. The problems in public education are not primarily problems with teachers, parents, administrators, or students. The problems grow out of a system. If we all work together to restructure that system, if we add standards, accountability and competition—kids win!"

● What's the history of AK2K?

AK2K was conceived in June of 1991 when Governor Walter J. Hickel told his newly appointed education commissioner, Jerry Covey, to develop a plan to improve Alaska's schools. Gov. Hickel had heard many citizens demand change in the educational system during his gubernatorial campaign.

His resolve to restructure public education was strengthened when President George Bush announced the America 2000 education strategy and the six National Education Goals (page 7) developed by the president and the nation's governors. Gov. Hickel and Commissioner Covey realized the importance of the national America 2000 movement as a vehicle for advancing education in Alaska.

Covey's approach, AK2K, was endorsed by the State Board of Education. The Board appointed a committee of 21 prominent Alaskans (page 2) to identify the important issues in education today.

Later, ten committees (right), comprising more than 100 other Alaskans, worked on action plans and recommendations to resolve these issues. Their recommendations are the heart of AK2K.

AK2K Committees

- Choice & Incentives
- Early Childhood
- Facilities
- Finance
- Laws & Regulations
- Quality of Workforce
- Shared Decisions/Self-Renewal
- Student Outcomes & Assessment
- System Accountability
- Technology

● What happens now?

The AK2K committees presented nearly 100 recommendations to the State Board of Education. The Board sifted through these and advanced those that would have the greatest and best effect on our schools and our young people. Now, the Board wants your opinions as it seeks a public consensus on educational restructuring.

Regional meetings, teleconferences, newspaper inserts, and radio advertising concerning the AK2K recommendations will culminate in an Education Summit September 14 and 15 at the William Egan Civic and Convention Center in Anchorage. U.S. Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander is scheduled to speak, as are Gov. Hickel and Commissioner Covey.

At the Summit, all Alaskans will have a chance to discuss the recommendations and give their best advice on how to improve education. The process should be dynamic and stimulating.

● How can I help?

That's the most important question of all, because without the support of the public, AK2K will not succeed. The students of Alaska need your help. They want to learn. Teachers want to teach them, and we have the resources to make it happen. We now have an action plan to show the way. All we need is the public support to convince the legislature and the local school districts that this is what we want. Here are some ways you can help:

- Read the recommendations on pages 8-11.
- Write to the Department of Education asking to be put on the AK2K mailing list. We'll keep you informed.
- Attend the Education Summit in Anchorage.
- Take part in regional AK2K meetings or teleconferences.
- Write and call your legislators supporting AK2K.
- Write and call your superintendent and local school board members supporting AK2K.
- Volunteer for local committees appointed to carry out the AK2K recommendations in your community.

NATIONAL EDUCATION GOALS

BY THE YEAR 2000:

- ① All children in America will start school ready to learn.
- ② The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent.
- ③ American students will leave grades four, eight, and twelve having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography; and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy.
- ④ U.S. students will be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement.
- ⑤ Every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
- ⑥ Every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.

● Imagine.

Imagine a system built on high standards for students, teachers and administrators. Imagine a system where people are accountable for their performance, and where incentives and competition spur them on to excellence. Imagine a system that won't accept a 25% drop-out rate, that awards diplomas for performance, not endurance. Imagine a system where parents can choose the best schools and educational programs for their children. Imagine a school funding plan that is fair, equitable, and rewards good planning and maintenance.

It's not hard to imagine. It's not unrealistic at all. And if we can do it, we attain the goal: Kids Win!

Sincerely,

Jerry Covey
Commissioner of Education

ALASKA 2000 RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

On July 15, after listening to reports from all ten Alaska 2000 committees, the State Board of Education advanced the following recommendations. Public comment is invited.

STANDARDS

• **Vision.** Adopt the following vision for an Alaska public education: The vision of Alaska 2000 is to graduate world-class students from our public school system who will communicate effectively, think logically and critically, discover and nurture their own creative talents, possess essential vocational and technological skills, be responsible citizens, be committed to their own health and fitness, accept personal responsibility for sustaining themselves economically, and have self-esteem.

• **Performance Standards.** Develop high performance standards for students and assessment methods in the following subject areas: (1) English; (2) Math; (3) Science; (4) Geography; (5) History; (6) Skills for healthy life; (7) Government & citizenship; (8) Fine arts; (9) Technological competence; (10) World languages. (A standard is a measurable definition of what students should know or be able to do. Standards guide the student testing system.)

• **Student Testing.** Measure student achievement of academic standards at three benchmark levels: (1) ages 8-10; (2) ages 12-14;

and ages 16-18. Measures will be tied to standards. Repeal state regulations requiring the Iowa Test of Basic Skills.

• **Certificates of Mastery.** Issue state "Certificates of Mastery" to students who reach the standards of the third benchmark and guarantee their knowledge and abilities. (A Certificate of Mastery is a state-issued warranty that a student has met state standards, guaranteeing that schools will reteach students who are lacking these skills.)

CHOICE

• **Charter Schools.** Implement a three-year pilot program authorizing teachers and parents to establish charter schools. (Charter schools operate under a contract between teachers, parents and local school boards to expand educational choice.)

• **School Choice.** Make existing public school choice programs available to all Alaska students by encouraging student transfers between school districts, boarding home arrangements, and a choice of correspondence schools.

• **Allowing Choice.** Amend statutes and regulations to: (1) allow schools of choice; (2) enable high school students to attend appropriate college classes as part of their high school program.

• **Vocational Programs.** Encourage school districts to establish busi-

ness-supported vocational programs that will prepare students to enter specific trades or businesses upon graduation.

FINANCE

• **Sharing Costs.** Each school district should pay a portion of the cost of an Alaska education and the total cost of programs beyond the Alaska education.

• **Per Capita Funding.** Fund school districts based on a per capita amount for the average number of students enrolled rather than instructional units.

• **School Price Index.** Develop an Alaska school price index to provide funding equity to the diverse geographical regions of the state.

• **Financial Standards.** Adopt state standards for financial reporting by school districts.

• **Reporting Student Contact Time.** Allow school districts to report student contact time in hours instead of days.

• **Transportation Costs.** School districts should be reimbursed for transportation at the lower of the district operated rate or the competitive bid rate for pupil transportation.

• **Rental Provision.** Include a rental provision in the foundation program so school districts can rent schools instead of owning them.

• **School Tax.** Levy a school tax of 1/2 of 1 percent of gross pay, not to exceed \$200 per person.

LAWS

• **Regulation Review.** Review Alaska education regulations every three years.

• **Withholding Funds.** Withhold state funds from school districts that violate regulations and statutes.

• **Sunset Review.** Subject all new education statutes to a five-year sunset review.

• **Approval of Regulations.** Establish shorter timelines for regulation approval process.

• **Waivers from Regulations.** Establish waivers for state education regulations so that school districts can use innovative approaches to improve student achievement.

FACILITIES

• **Capital Funding Priorities.** Fund the following priorities on the state's school construction list: Priority 1 (Health/Life/Safety) and Priority 3 (Protection of Structures) to clear a backlog exceeding \$100 million.

• **New Schools and Classrooms.** Fund the following priority on the state's school construction list: Priority 2 (Unhoused Students), which will cost \$100 million annually in addition to a backlog of \$250 million.

• **Sharing Capital Costs.** Change state capital projects funding from 100% grants to state and local sharing on a sliding scale, based on a community's ability to pay.

- **Two-Phased Funding.** Adopt a two-phased funding scheme for school capital construction. Phase 1: planning and site development; Phase 2: construction.
- **School Construction Standards.** Adopt state standards for school construction including space, quality of materials, and costs.
- **Funding Major Maintenance.** Provide annual set-aside for Major Maintenance of \$20-\$40 million annually. (Major Maintenance is a proposed new category of funding that combines the current Priority 3, Protection of Structures, and Priority 4, Code Upgrades.)
- **Preventive Maintenance.** Require school districts to demonstrate ongoing preventive maintenance as a condition for state funding of Major Maintenance.
- **Audit.** Require an independent audit of state-funded school construction projects and preventive maintenance projects to control cost and quality.
- **Facility Inventory.** Conduct a statewide educational facility inventory.
- **Construction Oversight.** Give the Department of Education oversight of the school construction process from contract award until the building is occupied.
- **Construction Standards.** Adopt construction standards for new schools to make possible the most effective use of current and anticipated information technologies. (For example, telecommunications access for all classrooms.)

- **Residential High Schools.** Assess the need and feasibility for building additional residential high schools and adding dormitories at existing high schools.

TECHNOLOGY

- **Technology Training.** Provide statewide training and support in educational technology for teachers.
- **Telecommunications Network.** Combine existing networks to create a statewide educational telecommunications network, accessible to all schools, that will support audio, video, and data.
- **Telecommunications Reporting System.** Implement a statewide administrative telecommunications reporting system.

WORKFORCE

- **Teacher Training Standards.** Adopt state standards for teacher training institutions requiring: (1) earlier and more responsible field experience for prospective teachers; (2) classroom teaching experience every five years for university professors involved in teacher education; (3) standardized education skill tests for applicants before admission to teacher education programs.
- **Additional Certification Requirements.** Add the following state certification requirements for new teachers: (1) a satisfactory score on a standardized teacher assessment test (for example, the National Teacher Exam), and (2) one year of satisfactory teaching experience or one year of successful internship under a mentor teacher prior to receiving a Type A certificate.

- **Knowledge of Technology.** Require competency in educational technology for initial teacher certification and certification renewal.

- **Staff Evaluation.** Revise certificated staff evaluation process to include parent and student comments, training for evaluators, and an independent audit of the evaluation process every three years.

- **Teacher Tenure.** Amend the Alaska teacher tenure law as follows: (1) application for tenure may be made after two years of service in a school district under a regular teaching certificate; (2) evaluations and recommendations must be presented with application; (3) local tenure review board must approve the application, subject to final approval by the local school board; (4) unsuccessful applicants may reapply annually; (5) tenure expires after seven years but may be renewed.

- **Master Teachers.** Establish a mentor/master teacher certificate endorsement.

NEW PROGRAMS

- **Student Incentive Grants.** Provide grants for effective student incentive programs.
- **Thirteen-Year Funding.** Fund students for 13 years of education through the age of 19, including tuition reimbursement for college credits.

- **Increased Student Contact Time.** Require a minimum of 180 days of student contact annually exclusive of staff inservice days and approved school closures. Increase student contact days to 200 by the year 2000.

- **Research and Development.** Provide funding to support research and development.

- **School Conservation Corps.** Create a School Conservation Corps, combining public service work with school work for drop-outs and at-risk students.

- **Advisory Boards.** Establish advisory boards or committees for each school in Alaska.

- **Encouraging Parental Responsibility.** Conduct a public information campaign reminding parents of their responsibility for their children's welfare.

PLEASE COMMENT: Please take the opportunity to comment on these recommendations at the Education Summit, Sept. 14 and 15 in Anchorage, at a public hearing, Sept. 22 in Fairbanks, or at teleconferences covering 35 communities during the week of Oct. 5. More information? Contact Harry Gamble, 465-2800 or write Alaska 2000, 801 W. Tenth St., Juneau, AK 99801-1894.