

1 responded there were many reasons for the reduced budget for books and supplies, including a declining enrollment,
2 having ordered a large number of textbooks the previous year and because the ASD was addressing technology.
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4 Ms. Frasca reported that test scores were up in language proficiency, math and language arts in all student groups.
5 To Mr. Traini, Superintendent Comeau responded that English was the primary language and all students were
6 required to take standardized English proficiency tests. Despite the dozens of languages spoken in the district,
7 English proficiency continued to go up. Mr. Steiner stated the ASD was required to measure the LEP (*Limited English*
8 *Proficiency*) which had shown huge gains. To Mr. Birch, Superintendent Comeau responded that the reduced
9 numbers of students, K-12, across the state was from a combination of increased private or homeschooled students
10 and kids dropping out, regardless of the ASD efforts. Mr. Steiner responded there had been a decrease in student
11 dropouts and the (*numbers of students in*) lower elementary grades had been growing. To Mr. Birch, Superintendent
12 Comeau responded the ASD had included more remedial programs that helped reduce the dropout rate and increase
13 graduation, but not fast enough.
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15 Ms. Frasca stated the ASD had increased costs each year for special education and she showed a graph of the
16 increased numbers of students with intensive medical needs. To Mr. Sullivan, Mr. Friedman responded that special
17 education students received funding from multiple sources. Ms. Frasca reviewed the average cost per student with
18 calculating in the impacts of special education and intensive needs students. Mr. Steiner stated this total amount
19 included the increases to PERS/TRS. Superintendent Comeau stated the federal law required special education
20 students to have a special education team, which assessed and evaluated each student's needs and developed each
21 education individually. Chair Coffey stated the chart indicated there was one out of seven students in special
22 programs. Superintendent Comeau responded that special needs students were accepted into the school system at
23 the age of three and could receive assistance until they were twenty-two years old. Mr. Steiner stated the ASD served
24 all kids, regardless whether they were in private programs or schools or home schools. Mr. Traini stated that all
25 parents felt their children needed to have specialized programs. To Ms. Johnston, Superintendent Comeau responded
26 that advanced students were no longer included as special education. Ms. Johnston stated that there were fixed costs
27 for intensive needs students and PERS/TRS, which would not change. Superintendent Comeau responded that costs
28 for one intensive needs medical student last year were over \$400,000. Ms. Johnston stated that the public needed to
29 see just the average cost per student, without other costs like PERS/TRS or special education. Mr. Friedman stated
30 that special education teachers also worked in classrooms and those costs would be difficult to determine. Dr.
31 Selkregg stated that the public needed to understand and commit to the costs of \$81,000 needed for each intensive
32 needs student. Superintendent Comeau responded it was being recognized that more and more intensive needs
33 students were coming in from all over Alaska and the ASD continued to request additional funding for the gap.
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35 Mr. Claman stated that while there was a decline in the numbers of students, there was an increase to intensive needs
36 students and it was important that the public understand the increased costs. Mr. Steele stated that there would be no
37 validity comparing costs with other districts. (*At 1:15 p.m. Chair Coffey left the Joint Meeting as an excused absence*
38 *and Ms. Ossiander assumed as Acting Chair.*) Ms. Johnston stated the fixed costs needed to be removed for the
39 public to understand the true costs per student. Mr. Friedman stated that would make the ASD budget look good. To
40 Dr. Selkregg, Superintendent Comeau responded the ASD had increased the numbers of health and physical
41 education teachers in elementary schools. Mr. Steiner stated the graph showed an unbalanced comparison, which
42 was misleading and should not be used. Ms. Frasca stated the report included contributing factors of increased costs
43 for higher salaries and benefits, specialized teachers, increased utility costs and associated costs with new schools.
44 Mr. Traini stated the public needed to understand that the costs for the federally mandated requirements for education
45 were added to the budget. Mr. Steiner stated the ASD was making progress and achievements were going up. New
46 reading programs were being added that were already showing great improvements. Dr. Selkregg responded that it
47 had been proven that 'either you pay now or you pay later' and the ASD studies could include that correlation.
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49 Ms. Frasca reported that 83% of the proposed budget went to school operations. Mayor Begich stated an additional
50 column was needed to show costs for facility operations and transportation. Ms. Frasca responded there were
51 different ways to calculate the totals. Ms. Frasca stated that increases to state funding per student were currently
52 being considered by Governor Palin. To Mr. Sullivan, Mayor Begich responded the state was currently considering
53 three bills, including increased funding for education, PERS/TRS and Revenue Sharing. The public would know the
54 mill rate once the figures were released.
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56 Anne Reed, Co-Chair of the Education and Workforce Advisory Commission, reported on the commission's
57 recommendations. These recommendations included approval of the ASD 2008-2009 budget, a five-year planning
58 budget, budgeting for computer replacement and contribution rates to be established for the PERS/TRS. To Mr.
59 Steiner, Ms. Reed responded that the average industry standard was to change out computers and operating systems
60 every five years. Mr. Sullivan stated there was a difference between the ASD's and the commission's budget totals.
61 ASD Chief Financial Officer Janet Stokesbury responded that the report was based on the preliminary budget and the
62 proposed budget submitted by the ASD included minor adjustments. Mr. Claman stated that there had not been a
63 district-wide facility needs assessment for years. Superintendent Comeau responded that there was a request from
64 the Capital Advisory Commission to address the matter with the Capital Improvement Plan. She distributed a
65 summary document prepared by the ASD Budget Office which helped explain the budget increases. Mr. Friedman
66 stated that the Anchorage School Board (ASB) could meet with the Capital Request Advisory Commission to discuss
67 the details, including computer replacement standards possibly being set by the industry. His computers worked fine
68 for more than five years. Ms. Reed and Dr. Selkregg concurred. Superintendent Comeau stated that all types of
69 education needed to be discussed.
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71 Ms. Johnston stated that the Assembly ASD Committee discussed the site selection process and pilot programs for
72 managed competition and she urged the two committees to work together. Mr. Sullivan stated that it was worthwhile to
73 address cost savings, studying successful structures of other school districts, like San Francisco's. Finland was the
74 top country in the world, setting standards for their education system, which needed to be analyzed. Mr. Steiner and
75 Crystal Kennedy each responded that Sweden also needed to be studied. Superintendent Comeau reported that Mr.
76 Vakalis would be addressing national urban school districts and how the ASD compared. She and Mr. Friedman

1 responded that San Francisco was no longer doing site-based management for education. Mr. Steele stated the ASB
 2 was always looking for ways to improve the system, relevant to the 21st Century, and the current format had worked
 3 well. Money had been included in the budget for computers and there would also be grant funding available. This
 4 would be the first year that the state funding would be known for the budgets prior to approving the budget. The ASD
 5 continually asked for money and all ASB members lobbied in Juneau to support state funding for schools. Mr. Traini
 6 stated it was a good idea to include Information Technology (IT) and computers in the budget, instead of bonding. Dr.
 7 Selkregg stated that privatization needed to be researched, establishing important organizational goals for resources
 8 and employees and to protect long term stability. She supported staying engaged at a national level to study
 9 education. Mr. Friedman stated that ASB members and ASD staff attended national conferences to compare and
 10 improve the education system. Mr. Tuck stated that it was important to understand the increased needs and costs. To
 11 improve the system and reduce the dropout rate, funding was needed, to offer specialized programs and career
 12 centers to get students back in the classroom. When budgets shrink, education failed. School districts need to
 13 prepare kids for higher education and for careers.

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15 **7. COMMENTS**

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17 Mr. Steiner stated that he appreciated Ms. Frasca's study, with new kinds of questions and different things to discuss.
 18 Dr. Selkregg stated that she appreciated the quality of information supplied and the in-depth research on the budget.
 19 She urged the ASB to address dropouts. Superintendent Comeau stated that she appreciated the work from Ms.
 20 Johnston and Ms. Frasca which, along with the ASD reports, would help educate the community. Ms. Johnston
 21 thanked Ms. Frasca, the commission and the ASD budget staff for their efforts. Mr. Roberts thanked Ms. Johnston and
 22 Ms. Frasca for their research and work.

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24 **8. SCHEDULE OF UPCOMING JOINT MEETINGS**

25 **8.a. Set Next Meeting.**

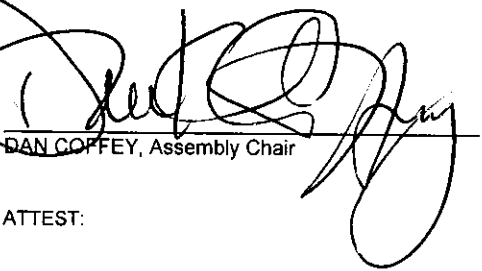
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27 Acting Chair Ossiander reported the Municipal Clerk would set the date for the next meeting and contact all parties.

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29 **9. ADJOURNMENT**


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31 Acting Chair Ossiander called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

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33 Ms. Kennedy moved, to adjourn the Joint Meeting,
 34 Mr. Traini seconded,
 35 and the motion passed without objection.

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37 The Joint Meeting was adjourned at 2:10 p.m.

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 47 DAN COFFEY, Assembly Chair

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 57 TIM STEELE, Anchorage School Board President

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49 ATTEST:
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 56 BARBARA GRUENSTEIN, Municipal Clerk
 57 Date Minutes Approved: September 5, 2008.
 58 MC/BG

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60 (Approved Meeting Minutes can be viewed online on the Municipal Web Site, www.muni.org~Assembly~Minutes~year~month/day
61 or copies are available from the Municipal Clerk's Office, 632 West 6th Avenue, Suite 250, Anchorage, Alaska; (907)343-4505)
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