Superintendent's Report – October 2026

Pre-K – 11
Kindergarten – 21
Grade 1 – 27
Grade 2 – 19
Grade 3 – 45
Grade 4 – 43
Grade 5 – 28
Grade 6 – 45
Grade 7 – 43
Grade 8 – 35
Grade 9 – 45
Grade 10 – 38
Grade 11 – 42
Grade 12 – 28
Total – 470

This represents the actual number of students we are currently supporting and does not directly reflect our official enrollment/ADM for funding purposes. Preschool students do not count as full-time students, and we also serve a number of part-time students which are included in the count listed above.

Celebrating Student Success and Learning

What an exciting time of year as we see our students excelling both inside and outside the classroom! A special shout-out and congratulations to our PHS Girls Cross Country Team – STATE CHAMPIONS! It was exciting to watch the race livestreamed through School Board President Holmgrain's Facebook feed. Congratulations to our athletes and first-year coaches Kayleigh Lenhard and her husband on this outstanding accomplishment!

Our music students are also giving us plenty to celebrate! Congratulations to our 17 PHS musicians selected for the 2026 Southeast Honors Music Festival, including three students in band and 14 in choir, who will travel to Haines at the end of October. We also just learned that seven students were selected as All-State musicians, with one additional student named as an alternate! Congratulations to these talented students, who will represent Petersburg at the All-State Music Festival in Anchorage this November. Our fall concerts are also underway, with the PHS Band Concert scheduled for October 20, immediately following our School Board meeting.

Meanwhile, classroom learning continues, with students participating in reading assessments that help us monitor progress and guide instruction. From athletics and the arts to academic growth, it's wonderful to see our students' hard work and learning in action!

Petersburg Attendance Highlighted in AKEdTribune

I was recently contacted by a reporter from AKEdTribune regarding Petersburg School District's attendance data, which showed that our chronic absenteeism rates have remained below the statewide average for five consecutive years. The October 5 article also highlighted that our economically disadvantaged students had a chronic absenteeism rate of 27.2%, compared to 50.2% statewide in 2025. While we certainly have room for continued improvement, this is encouraging recognition of the relationships, family partnerships, and community support that help keep our students connected to school and learning.

Article: Petersburg's Low-Income Attendance Gap Stayed Within Three Points – AKEdTribune

Parent-Teacher Conferences and Professional Development

We recently held our fall parent-teacher conferences, with Stedman Elementary reporting an impressive 92% parent participation rate. While we would like to see higher participation at the secondary level, administrators noted an increase in parent engagement this year. Thank you to our families and staff for taking the time to connect around student learning.

Following conferences on September 24–25, we held two days of district-wide professional development, welcoming Karen and Pilar from NIET and Yana from Corwin. The sessions were structured around instruction, literacy, student engagement, and student ownership of learning, with opportunities for collaboration, planning, movement, and educator choice.

Support staff spent half a day participating in CPR training at PMC's Wellness Center (thank you, Becky Turland!) and a session with Ms. Fry introducing the district's Visible Learning and student engagement work. On the second day, they joined teachers for professional development sessions.

Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, particularly around the opportunity for voice and choice in selecting sessions and learning strategies that could be immediately applied in classrooms. We appreciate this feedback and look forward to continuing this approach in future professional development opportunities.

Raising the Bar for Alaska Schools – White Paper

Attached is the Raising the Bar for Alaska Schools white paper, developed as we closed out the three-year grant. It highlights the meaningful work and capacity building across seven participating districts, including the impact of sustained professional learning and leadership development in rural Alaska schools.

I encourage Board members to read the paper and reflect on what has been accomplished. I plan to share it with our Alaska legislators and congressional delegation, and Principal Conn and Assistant Principal Cabral will also share copies during their upcoming trip to Washington, D.C., representing the Alaska Principals Association.

On September 26, Jaime Cabral and Jim Engell joined me at the Alaska Superintendents Association conference in Valdez to share Petersburg's work alongside other participating districts. What was scheduled as a 30-minute panel became a 90-minute discussion due to the tremendous interest from superintendents. Jaime and Jim were the only non-superintendents on the panel, and it was especially rewarding to hear their perspectives and the thoughtful questions directed their way. Thank you both for helping share Petersburg's story!

AASA Governing Board and Federal Education Priorities

In July I was elected as one of two Alaska superintendents serving on the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) Governing Board, representing Region 1 alongside Patrick Mayer, Superintendent of Alaska Gateway School District. Our work focuses on state and federal education policy and ensuring Alaska's unique needs are represented. At the September superintendents' meeting in Valdez, Patrick and I shared updates on federal issues impacting Alaska schools.

Key priorities include E-Rate funding, federal Title programs and IDEA funding, and school nutrition requirements. These programs are especially important for rural districts as we navigate connectivity needs, federal funding uncertainties, rising food costs, and increasingly complex regulations.

Attached is the Alaska Superintendents Association's *Supporting Alaska's Public Schools: Federal Priorities*, which also addresses educator recruitment, Alaska Native education funding, Impact Aid, and Secure Rural Schools. I encourage Board members to review these priorities, which reflect many of the challenges facing rural Alaska districts. I appreciate the opportunity to help ensure Alaska's voice is part of these important conversations.

Supporting Staff in Their Educational Pursuits

We continue to support staff pursuing professional growth and educational opportunities. Congratulations to Rocky Peeler, Christy Ware, Keely Ware, and Mary Dunker, recipients of the GREAT Grant, which allows them to work full-time while pursuing special education teaching credentials!

We are also exploring support for Trevor Wilson through the University of Alaska Southeast Principal Apprenticeship Program. Gus Pennington is pursuing his Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) licensure, and community member Eva Lenhard is working toward her Occupational Therapy (OT) licensure. It's exciting to support these educational pursuits while strengthening our capacity to serve students.

Door Security Upgrades Project

Our door security upgrades project continues as we work with the contractor to address the remaining items identified in the inspection report. Finalizing the project is taking longer than anticipated, but we continue to work through the outstanding details to ensure everything is completed correctly. The door contractor is expected on-site the week of October 16 to paint the newly replaced doors.

A special thank you to Technology Director John Kludt Painter and Facilities Manager Aaron Bueller, whose involvement has gone well beyond what we originally anticipated. I truly appreciate their continued efforts and commitment to ensuring our systems function as intended and the project is completed properly.

Looking Ahead: 2027–2028 School Calendar

We are beginning to look ahead to the 2027–2028 school year and the development of our school calendar. An initial calendar input survey has been shared with staff and will remain open for the next couple of weeks. Once we've reviewed their feedback, we'll develop preliminary calendar drafts and invite students and families to provide input through a community survey. This feedback will help us further refine a proposed calendar for the School Board's consideration.