

THE LAKE AND PENINSULA SCHOOL DISTRICT

101 Jenson Drive
King Salmon, AK 99613
907-246-4280

101 W Arctic Ave, Suite D
Palmer, AK 99645
907-745-7090



Date: December 10, 2020
To: Lake and Peninsula School Board
From: Ty Mase
Re: Superintendent's Report – December, 2020

2020 Fall Semester in Review

COVID-19 – What seemed almost impossible in August has now become our normal mode of operation. Schools have moved from green, to red, to yellow and back to green with very little commotion or interruption to student learning. Our mitigation plans (knock on wood) have so far proven effective and we are pleased with the efforts of all of our stakeholders in making an in-person school year possible!

COVID Committee – As we wrap up a very busy semester for this committee, I would like to publicly thank Rick Luthi, Judy Hollander, Danica Wilson and Shannon Johnson-Nanalook for your hard work and commitment. This group has done an incredible amount of work figuring out and implementing COVID policies for LPSD.

SmartStart 21 – While the start of the year proved challenging, the return from Christmas break and the start of the second semester are proving to be a daunting task as well. Again, our individual site's flexibility and willingness to problem solve has allowed those staff who chose to make it home for the holidays to be with loved ones, yet still be ready to open the doors of our schools for the spring semester.

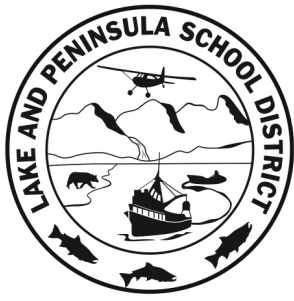
Board Guidance / Participation – It has been over a dozen years now that I have worked with this board, and your willingness to do what is needed never ceases to amaze me. Our meetings every two weeks at the start of the year allowed administration to stay in touch with the different communities in our region and provided much needed guidance in setting policy during these unprecedented times.

Cares Act Funds – The silver lining to arguably our most challenging school year has been the Borough's willingness to work with the district to expend Cares Act Funds. Curriculum, Computers, and Vehicles were in a state of disrepair with no monies available to solve the problem. The Borough's contributions have allowed us to make much needed upgrades and set the district up nicely for many years to come.

Teacher Signing Incentives – A huge thanks to the Board and LPEA for making this idea a reality. State-wide this will be seen as an innovative approach to recruit and retain staff. It is a win-win for teachers and the district and I am proud that this went through.

Celebrating Excellent Teachers – Our 20/21 Marigolds will be decided at this meeting. Nominated or not, we know who our marigolds are – it is these amazing educators who make up the backbone of LPSD and define "who we are." A huge thank you goes out to our 20/21 nominated individuals and award winners!

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Enrollment – While districts across the State struggled with decreased enrollment, LPSD’s remoteness and ability to offer in-person school has stabilized our enrollment. We are actually up a few students at 321, in comparison to last year’s 309. Several schools are growing rapidly with Newhalen predicted to be at 74 students (+14 preschoolers) next year and Kokhanok will jump to 41 (+6 preschoolers). The Bay unfortunately, is slated to have six or seven students next year.

Igiugig Duplex – Now our 5th largest school site, Igiugig is in need of a third teacher and more classroom space. Currently, the district has one housing unit and a small itinerant in IGI (we also rent a small house from the village). In order to consider another teacher, we first will have to find additional housing. LPSD has applied for an AHFC housing grant for a new duplex. If awarded, our plan will be to begin construction this spring.

Cross Country Success - It’s only been a few years since LPSD revived X-Country (2009) and we have quickly become competitive at the State level. This year’s LPSD State qualifiers from Port Alsworth and Newhalen represented the district well - Aileen Lester (1st place), Malea Voran (4th Place), Daniel Wardell (2nd Place), and Jaden Tretikoff (13th place).

BBRC TE – Our new Director continues to earn his keep, even during a pandemic. Zach Stenson has devised a comprehensive schedule of virtual CTE opportunities for our region’s students. Happening right now:

- ✓ Intro to Allied Health
- ✓ Small Engines Program
- ✓ Drone Essentials Course
- ✓ Driver’s license prep (self-paced)
- ✓ Intro to Aviation (self-paced)

For second semester, the following will be offered:

- ✓ Driver’s license prep
- ✓ Drone Essentials
- ✓ Energy Literacy
- ✓ Preparing for College Success
- ✓ Professional Skills for the Job Hunt
- ✓ Intro to Aviation
- ✓ Alaska Business and Entrepreneurship
- ✓ Intro to Nautical Skills (application deadline is Dec. 18th)
- ✓ Medical Terminology

Swivl Technology – We now have this technology at every school site allowing administrators and teachers (mentors) to view classrooms from afar. Again, we adopted this platform out of necessity, not knowing how valuable it would become during a time of reduced travel. Many of our certified evaluations and walk-throughs are now happening through this platform.

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Graduations – Kaiden Fowler, a Tanalian student, pushed through and finished his standards a semester early. Congratulations, Kaiden! Candace Carpenter, a student from Chignik Bay, has also completed her standards early and will be graduating this semester as well. Nice work, Candance!

Earthquake Shakes the South - Last year it was the Levelock and Port Heiden wildfires and this year it was a 7.5 earthquake followed by a Tsunami warning in the South. LPSD continues to play the hand that mother nature deals us and we keep education going strong.

Funding – While it is anticipated that the Governor’s budget (December 15) and Legislative session will be extremely unkind to education, we are finding that we are not spending as much with travel restrictions and canceled events. To date we have spent just 7% of our travel budget. A bit of cushion as we head into even more challenging financial times is a good thing.

Online Educational Offerings - We continue to offer solid educational offerings in LA and Math for our small schools and many online opportunities for all LPSD students. We went this route out of necessity and had no idea how beneficial this would become in light of our current pandemic. Christian Meneskie and Marli Nikolaus (Manning) continue to be rock stars for LPSD.

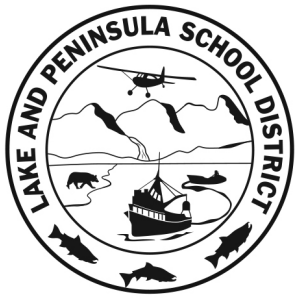
Cares Act Internet Program – Through a grant awarded to the four regional school districts (written by Dillingham SD) we have been able to provide home internet services to all of our students enrolled in our online course offerings. If / when schools go into a high-risk scenario, students can continue to receive online instruction in LA and Math.

Candice’s Books for Kids – With the reduction in grant activities, monies have been allocated to this program, allowing us to stock pile books and again, ready ourselves for the future. It is an awesome sight to see the back of the district office fill up with children’s books. We are in year eleven of this wonderful program.

Happy Birthday Standards Based System – Can you believe that it has been twenty years since the SBS was implemented? As districts across the nation try to figure out how to individualize instruction, LPSD has been doing it for two decades. We look forward to celebrating this twenty-year milestone this spring when we can get together again.

To close, I have been doing this job for over twelve years now and as I write this report, I can’t help but think that we are doing a pretty good job with the hand we have been dealt. We are communicating, we are allowing individual sites to decide what is best for them, and our processes seem to be working. In light of the mess our State, Country and World is faced with, I am just happy to have our doors open and offering safe educational opportunities for our kids. A lot of folks have stepped up this year and, though faced with possibly our biggest challenge ever, we have continued to show that we are an excellent school district committed to our communities and kids. I look forward to the spring semester!

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