

Spring 2020 West Anchorage Candidates Forum

SCHOOL BOARD Candidates Questions & Responses

Assembly and School Board candidates were asked to provide responses to several questions prepared by the sponsoring councils: North Star, Sand Lake, Spenard, Taku Campbell and Turnagain Community Councils.

Responses by **School Board** candidates are listed below. Responses were not edited, except that any responses not following the requested format (yes/no, or 100-word limit) were trimmed to fit the format.

Election Information

Website with all information about the election: www.muni.org/elections

- **Tuesday, March 17:** Ballots were mailed to Anchorage voters' addresses.
- **Wednesday, March 18:** Ballot drop boxes are unlocked. Drop off your ballot in one of the boxes around the city, or add first-class postage (\$0.70!) and mail.
- **Tuesday, April 7:** Election Day! Ballots must be postmarked or in an official drop box by this date. Ballot drop boxes will be locked at 8 p.m. on April 7th.

Reminder: To protect public health, there are no in-person voting options this year. You may see outdated information about in-person voting centers: these will not be operational. Drop off your ballot or send via mail, with required postage.

From the Muni website: "The election is a Vote at Home election. Traditional polling places will not be open and are not an option for voting on Election Day."

The Municipal Clerk's Office reminds that, "Voting at home is as easy as 1-2-3!"

1. **Vote your ballot - both sides of both cards** - fill in the ovals completely, place both cards (A & B) in the security envelope, then into the ballot return envelope.
2. **Sign the declaration** on the back of the ballot return envelope.
3. **Save postage by returning your ballot** to a Secure Drop Box or an Anchorage Vote Center (AVC), or, mail your ballot with first class postage* through the United States Postal Service. (Total postage in the amount of 70 cents will be required if a voter chooses to return the ballot with two cards by USPS.)

If a voter loses, damages, or does not receive a ballot package in the mail, the voter is asked to call the Voter Hotline at (907) 243-VOTE (8683) to request a replacement ballot package. The Voter Hotline hours of operation are Monday through Friday between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

If you have any questions, call the Voter Hotline: (907) 243 – VOTE (8683).

Candidate Information

Name: Dave Donley

Seat you are running for: Anchorage School Board, Seat C

Website: www.dave4asd.com

Facebook: Dave Donley School Board (search for this page)

Introduction (100 words max)

1. Please share a little about yourself: your experience, background, etc.

Born in Anchorage. Graduated Dimond, University of Oregon (Phi Beta Kappa) and University of Washington Law. Passed Alaska bar exam first try. Mensan.

Worked Alaska Pipeline as firefighter, laborer, and logger. Represented Spenard State House 1987-1992. Labor and Commerce Chair twice and Judiciary Chair. State Senator 1993-2002, Finance Committee, Co-chair and Vice Chair. State Chief of Adjudications / Hearing Officer.

Alaska State military officer Alaska State Defense Force since 2009, as Colonel and Staff Judge Advocate. Certified BBB arbitrator, recipient Alaska State Community Service Medal and NRA Defender of Freedom award. Married with twins in Sixth Grade.

Yes/No Questions

Please check the “Yes” or “No” box for each question below. Additional text responding to these questions will not be published.

#	<u>Question</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
2.	Before declaring yourself as a candidate, have you participated in your local Community Council in the last 3 years?	X	
3.	Do you or have you had a student enrolled in the Anchorage School District?	X	
4.	Do you support Ballot Proposition 2 for \$82,833,000 in bonds to fund Anchorage School District Capital Improvements?	X	
5.	Do you support efforts to consolidate under-capacity public schools within the District?	X	

Short Response Questions (100 words max per question)

6. What personal experience have you had, or have now, with public education?

Twins in Sixth Grade
Son recent Service Graduate
Born/raised in Anchorage / Dimond Graduate
American Legion School Award
ASD Social Studies Curriculum Committee
Alaska Bar Law Related Education Committee
High School Debate Judge
Instructor Laborers' Training School
Senator - Sixteen-year Anchorage legislator
Sponsor School Bus Safety Act
Sponsor Infant Care Curriculum
Authored numerous pro-education laws
Chair Senate Finance Education Subcommittee
Three-time Co-chair Anchorage Legislative Caucus
Co-chair Senate Finance Committee
PTA Member/State Delegate
School "Noon Duty" / Crossing Guard
Substitute teacher training
Northern Lights ABC School Advisory Board
Member Anchorage School Board
FEMA trained disaster management professional

7. How would you evaluate the current School Board's response to recent disasters and emergencies, like the 2018 earthquake and COVID-19?

As a FEMA trained professional disaster manager, serving on the State Emergency Response Commission and as a designee on the Governor's Disaster Cabinet, I know the importance of emergency planning. Extensive planning in preparation of such events is the only way to ensure effective response. The ASD's team response prioritizing the safety of our students during these emergencies has overall been very good. Improved communications with parents and the community is needed however. With over 46,000 students and 90 buildings the challenges are immense. After the initial response, improved public outreach and participation in event management is essential.

8. Due to the Anchorage School District facing significant fiscal challenges going forward, what would you target for reduced funding?

Each year I have served on the School Board I have offered budget amendments to reduce non-classroom related administrative overhead to hold down class sizes. I have offered budget amendments to reduce executive pay, school board expenses, and unneeded membership fees in advocacy groups. I have sponsored budget amendments to prioritize school safety projects and overdue maintenance instead of building new schools. My 2018 and 2019 amendments to school bonds helped hold them to below the total amount of debt planned to be retired in those years; saving money for Anchorage taxpayers.

9. How would you prioritize achievement of goals for the Anchorage School District, such as high testing scores, high graduation rates, infrastructure funding, etc?

My top priorities include safe schools and having all students reading by third grade. I support 60 minute elementary lunch and recess. I support continuing charter, alternative, language immersion, vocational, Ignite, and Middle College, schools and programs. We need to increase accountability at all levels to improve results. I sponsored an END to automatic grade promotion and replaced it with a new “what is in the best interest of the student” standard for when a student repeats a grade, with mandatory parent involvement with that decision making. I support returning to proven successful traditional reading, math and civics.

10. Why are you the best candidate for this seat?

After sixteen years as a State Senator and Representative people ask: why would I want to be on the School Board? It’s simple: my wife Jamie and I have twins in sixth grade; we need our schools to succeed. I love our country and I believe the public schools are the foundation of America’s greatness. Our Constitutional Republic can ONLY work if we have an educated public and that requires successful public schools.

I have kept my campaign promises. I have been a voice for common sense on the School Board.

I respectfully ask for your vote.

Candidate Information

Name: James Smallwood

Seat you are running for: Anchorage School Board, Seat C

Website: www.jamessmallwood.com

Introduction (100 words max)

1. Please share a little about yourself: your experience, background, etc.

My family moved to Anchorage in the 80s because my dad was stationed at Fort Richardson. I went to school through the Anchorage School District. When I graduated from high school, I eventually left Alaska, moved to Portland, Oregon. I graduated from Portland State University and moved back home towards the end of 2009. I have served as a Youth Pastor, Mentor, Community Leader, ASD Substitute Teacher, Small Business Owner, Family Coach, and, most of all, a Husband, and a Father.

Yes/No Questions

Please check the “Yes” or “No” box for each question below. Additional text responding to these questions will not be published.

#	<u>Question</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
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3.	Do you or have you had a student enrolled in the Anchorage School District?	X	
4.	Do you support Ballot Proposition 2 for \$82,833,000 in bonds to fund Anchorage School District Capital Improvements?	X	
5.	Do you support efforts to consolidate under-capacity public schools within the District?	X	X

Short Response Questions (100 words max per question)

6. What personal experience have you had, or have now, with public education?

I grew up in Anchorage and attended public school. I am also a parent of two children that are part of the Anchorage School District, a Community Leader, an Education

Advocate, and a former ASD Substitute Teacher. I am also a graduate of the Anchorage School Board Academy.

7. How would you evaluate the current School Board's response to recent disasters and emergencies, like the 2018 earthquake and COVID-19?

I do think the initial reaction and responses from the ASD Admin following the 2018 earthquake was absolutely appropriate. However, I was surprised to find out later that the school district had not established an earthquake insurance policy before this natural disaster. Regarding responding to COVID-19, the school district is following guidelines from different states. I think it's a little too early to give a full critique just because we are still living in the moment of this pandemic. I do expect at some point ASD will evaluate themselves to see lessons learned and what worked and did not work.

[Editor note: the end of this response was shortened to fit the 100-word limit]

8. Due to the Anchorage School District facing significant fiscal challenges going forward, what would you target for reduced funding?

At this point, with the state's economy, there is no easy solution. If cuts are made, there also needs to be new revenues too. It's going to take ASD, the Municipality, and the state of Alaska to look outside of the box and figure out how to adequately fund education. Some suggestions would be by generating revenues byways of real estate assets, reducing health claims, and increasing ASD homeschool students enrollments. One point I want to make clear is that I do not support the reduction in our teachers and supporting staff.

9. How would you prioritize achievement of goals for the Anchorage School District, such as high testing scores, high graduation rates, infrastructure funding, etc?

I believe the mission/goal of the Anchorage School District should always be centered around academic achievement for every student. The question that every School Board Member should ask is, "How does my decision contribute to a student's educational success?". If a board member asks that question every time, on every policy decision, it will help them to know what a priority is and what are distractions. An educated society is a society that is thriving.

10. Why are you the best candidate for this seat?

As a parent of two children that are part of the Anchorage School District and a former ASD Substitute Teacher, I understand the needs of our students and the Anchorage public. I am running for the Anchorage School Board because I believe that Anchorage families deserve an advocate that represents the values of our community. Unlike my opponent who's voting record has shown he represents the Governor of Alaska, not the Anchorage community. He has displayed unethical behavior by working for the Governor while keeping his elected position.

Candidate Information

Name: John Cates

Seat you are running for: Anchorage School Board, Seat D

Website: None provided

Note: We did not receive a statement from this candidate by the Sunday evening deadline. However, given the disruption of the COVID-19 emergency response many people have been focused on responding to the changing situation and/or are directly impacted. In these difficult circumstances, please do not interpret a lack of response to our questionnaire as a lack of interest.

Candidate Information

Name: Andy Holleman

Seat you are running for: Anchorage School Board, Seat D

Website: www.VoteAndyAk.com

Facebook: VoteAndyAk **Email:** VoteAndyAk@gmail.com

Introduction (100 words max)

1. Please share a little about yourself: your experience, background, etc.

I'm a 35 year resident of Anchorage and retired from the Anchorage School District, with one son that was in ASD for 12 years. I know a lot about how classrooms and schools work when they're working well, and I try to bring that balance to the Board. I try to convey the issues to the public as clearly and accurately as I can. We do have weaknesses we're working on, but there are also great things happening in ASD at every school. I hope everyone will look at the balance of everything we do. Please go to the website for a yard sign to help show support!

Yes/No Questions

Please check the "Yes" or "No" box for each question below. Additional text responding to these questions will not be published.

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2.	Before declaring yourself as a candidate, have you participated in your local Community Council in the last 3 years?	X	
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5.	Do you support efforts to consolidate under-capacity public schools within the District?	X	

Short Response Questions (100 words max per question)

6. What personal experience have you had, or have now, with public education?

I've been a tutor in the Migrant Ed program years ago. I've worked in the classroom as a Science, Math, Computer Skills, and building technology coordinator.

I also served 4 years as president of the Anchorage Education Association, which put me deep in issues relating to contracts, teacher/principal relationships, scheduling, calendars, and many other District-level details.

7. How would you evaluate the current School Board's response to recent disasters and emergencies, like the 2018 earthquake and COVID-19?

As much as I'd like to take more credit, the real response comes from the Superintendent and her staff. For the most part, on the two emergencies, they've done very well. There have been some communications issues around Covid-19, but it's also a much more confusing issue. The District is being very well managed in trying times, but I will add that I have fundamental disagreements with the Supt over academic issues and how curriculum is being implemented. We've taken lead steps in keeping students, staff and community safe, we're proud of that record, but the Board plays a support role.

[Editor note: the end of this response was shortened to fit the 100-word limit]

8. Due to the Anchorage School District facing significant fiscal challenges going forward, what would you target for reduced funding?

We face some complex conundrums, and folks that feel there's a simple solution out there that we're just not doing are not understanding key things. We do have to have a payroll department, a purchasing department, an accounting office, an IT staff, and a number of others. ASD is a big operation, and it has to have oversight and management like any organization. If you consider over 40,000 students a day served by a staff of over 6,000 in over 90 locations, cannot do with zero management.

We are faced with cutting programs or doing what we do less well.

[Editor note: the end of this response was shortened to fit the 100-word limit]

9. How would you prioritize achievement of goals for the Anchorage School District, such as high testing scores, high graduation rates, infrastructure funding, etc?

We have specific goals about test scores but the reality is, we do thousands of things every day and they all matter. We have to do right by our AP students, Honors, SPED, Intensive needs, and our largest group....pretty normal kids that show up and make an effort without too much disruption. We need every classroom teacher to have the resources and the time to address the specific needs of the students they see - they're the ASD employees that know our students by name.

We're not honoring that goal as much as we should be.

10. Why are you the best candidate for this seat?

I did “other things” for more than 20 years before I became professionally involved in education. I learned a lot there as well. My range in teaching is middle and high school, but my work in AEA caused me to spend a lot of time on elementary issues as well. Yes, some things we do don't make immediate sense to people outside the buildings, but there is a reason behind them. We've learned a lot from working with scores of thousands of students. I had some success in the classroom, I hope to continue on the Board by empowering educators.

[Editor note: the end of this response was shortened to fit the 100-word limit]

Candidate Information

Name: Phil Isley

Seat you are running for: Anchorage School Board, Seat D

Website: None provided

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