

# High Expectations Needed for Students and Schools

While it is true that Alaska's students perform as well as most students in the United States, it is also true that U.S. students are significantly undereducated when compared with their peers in other industrialized nations.

According to Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, "...what we have in this country is a very, very serious failure to achieve academic standards which are achieved in all the other industrial countries in the world."

If we expect little from our students, we can't blame them for meeting our expectations. If we fail to set high standards, we fail our young people.

Can we raise our expectations for what students should learn? Can Alaskans agree on what students should know and be able to do as a result of a public school education? We have not done so yet. But we can, and we must.

The first thing we need to do is establish clear expectations for students and educators. That is what the proposed student performance standards in math, science and English/language arts contained in this publication are aimed at doing.

With clear standards, our schools can channel their energy and resources where it will do the most good for our students. With clear standards, citizens will know what to expect from their schools and will be able to hold their elected school boards and school administrators accountable for world-class student performance.

If you believe that our schools can do better, if you believe that our young people deserve the best education we can give them, if you



want to be part of the solution, the time for action is now.

Here are four things you can do right away:

- Read the student performance standards in this publication.
- Express your opinion by filling out the short survey form on the back page of this publication.
- Testify at one of the many hearings scheduled around the state. (See the schedule on page 8.)
- Talk to your friends and encourage them to comment, too.

We know that all Alaska students can perform at higher levels than they do at present. This is not a just a dream, but a necessity for the future.

If we aim high, our students will be able to compete economically and join the technological transformation now occurring in workplaces all over the world. If we aim low, or refuse to aim at all, our students will lack the knowledge and skills required of workers in even entry level jobs.

For years our European and Asian competitors have required high standards for high school graduation, and for years they have been chipping away at America's economic leadership. We, on the other hand, have set no standards. We now have a chance to do so.

Your voice will be heard and your opinion will make a difference. The State Board of Education needs your involvement.