



May 28, 2020

City Administrator John Leach  
City and Borough of Sitka  
john.leach@cityofsitka.org

Dear Mr. Leach,

On behalf of the School Board, I am writing to request that half of the FY20 Secure Rural Schools funding be shared with the Sitka School District. The willingness of the City to share equally in the Secure Rural Schools funding over the years has been a key factor in allowing us to provide the best possible education we can every year to our students, families, and the community of Sitka. We don't normally make a request for Secure Rural Schools funding, and we are happy to do so if it would be helpful given the timing of the receipt of the funds.

Previously, we understood that half of the FY20 Secure Rural Schools funding would be used to support the City in funding the school district to the maximum amount allowable for instructional support in FY21. We have since learned that only half of the FY21 Secure Rural Schools funding was used to support the City's FY21 local contribution to the school district. Thus there are still FY20 Secure Rural School funds that might be available to be shared with the school district. Historically Secure Rural Schools funding is shared with the district in addition to the local contribution for instructional purposes, which has a maximum limit.

This year we engaged students, families, staff, and the community in a *Leave Your Print* challenge to gather input on the strategic direction that the school district should focus on for the next 3-5 years, and we garnered quite a bit of input in the process. Specifically, 319 voices were involved in our process and 186 ideas were submitted that were rated 3,673 times. During the voting phase of our challenge there were 10,297 votes cast to select the most important idea to move forward as our strategic plan. The top idea centered on providing more mental health support for our students and specifically to ensure that we had a full-time Counselor/Social Worker in every school. Since this time, we have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic that makes the need for mental health support for our students even more urgent.

During our FY21 Budget deliberations, every School Board Member expressed interest in funding two positions that surfaced as the highest unmet needs in the district, as they would fulfil the need to have a full-time Counselor/Social Worker in every school. I cannot speak for the School Board, but I can share that each member expressed concern for our students because we were not able to fund these two positions. If the Assembly decided to share half of the FY20 Secure Rural Schools funding with the district, the available funding would cover the cost for the district to fulfil a need that we see and is also supported by the community members who engaged in our *Leave Your Print* challenge. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Mary Wegner  
Superintendent