

State-Tribal Education Compacting Update

Background

- In 2013, **Washington State created a framework for the first state-tribal education compacts in the nation** ([E2SHB 1134](#)), enhancing tribal autonomy in public education. Today, there are 8 compact schools operating in Washington, 6 of which are also Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) tribally controlled schools.
- Since 1983, **Alaska tribes have been restricted from utilizing federal funds for education** due to the “Stevens Rider” ([25 U.S.C. 292b](#)), making the state-tribal compacting framework critical for fostering tribal involvement and self-determination in Alaska’s single system of public education.
- In 2017, the concept of [Tribal compacting in education in Alaska](#) originated during Commissioner Michael Johnson’s tenure **as part of the state’s *Education Challenge***, which identified five key priorities for improving educational outcomes. Tribal compacting specifically advances the goal to **"Inspire Tribal and Community Ownership of Educational Excellence"** by leveraging government-to-government partnerships that reflect the unique needs of Alaska Native students and communities.
- **What is a compact?** A compact is a government-to-government agreement that delegates authority and resources to tribes, empowering them to govern services—such as education—based on their community’s specific needs and priorities.
- Tribal education compacting builds on Alaska’s legacy of tribal governance through **ICWA and Native health compacting**, but requires a tailored framework that adheres to the requirements of the **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)**.
- In 2022, the [Alaska Legislature passed SB 34](#), authorizing negotiations with up to five tribes to recommend a framework for state-tribal compact demonstration schools.
- From April-October 2023, five tribes—**Tlingit & Haida (T&H)**, **Knik Tribal Council (KTC)**, **Ketchikan Indian Community (KIC)**, **Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope (ICAS)**, and **King Island Native Community**—negotiated with the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED). These efforts culminated in the [State Tribal Education Compacting \(STEC\) report](#), presented to the Legislature in 2024.

HB 59 / SB 66 : STATE-TRIBAL EDUCATION COMPACTS

- The bill was introduced at the beginning of the 2025 legislative session by Gov. Dunleavy, and proposes a **multi-year demonstration project** for the creation and operation of **five Tribally Compacted Public Schools (TCPS)**.
- Through a **government-to-government relationship**, DEED and each of the five tribes will **negotiate** an education service compact agreement, which will include an educational framework based on the required provisions in the bill and recommendations from the SB 34 – State Tribal Education Compacting (STEC) report.
- **Under tribal jurisdiction**, these Tribally Compacted Public Schools will:
 - Be considered as a **Local Education Agencies (LEAs)** under state law, increasing eligibility for tribes to receive state and federal grant funds.

Request for Support: State-Tribal Education Compacts

- Operate under **tribal governing bodies**, reflecting the principles of self-determination and sovereignty.
- Develop **tribal prioritizations for teacher requirements** in collaboration with DEED, ensuring culturally responsive educators provide an education tailored to community needs and knowledge.
- Receive state education funding based on the **Base Student Allocation (BSA)**, following Regional Education Attendance Area (REAA) allocation requirements.

Key Highlights

- **Sovereignty in Education:** Tribes will have authority to design and implement schools grounded in their language, culture, values, and ways of knowing, ensuring education reflects community priorities and local control over education while advancing the goals of Alaska's Education Challenge.
- **Language and Culture as Foundations:** TCPS can prioritize Indigenous languages as a medium of instruction, supporting the goals of the federal Native American Languages Act and statewide language revitalization efforts set by the Council for Alaska Native Languages.
- **Strength-Based Delivery:** Tribes will have the opportunity to utilize Alaska's Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools and the Alaska Native Language Reading Standards and Assessments to shape and improve education delivery systems and foster student success.
- **Family and Community Engagement:** TCPS will embed local control by elevating family and community voices in governance, design, and implementation, creating culturally grounded, community-driven systems that address engagement gaps often present in traditional LEAs.
- **Values-Based Success:** Tribes will shape success by aligning evaluation frameworks and teacher requirements with their cultural values and community priorities, ensuring educational systems are responsive to tribal needs and goals.
- **Innovation and Collaboration:** TCPS will serve as models for innovative pedagogy and community-centered learning, with the flexibility to operate multiple sites within tribal jurisdictions and collaborate with local districts to share resources and services.
- **Equitable Funding:** Tribally compacted schools will receive state funding on par with all Alaska public schools, ensuring equity and sustainability.
- **Holistic Impact:** By aligning education systems with tribally centered structures, services and support, TCPS will advance community well-being, workforce development, and cultural preservation, fostering long-term benefits for Alaska Native communities.