Alaska Superintendents Association

234 Gold Street • Juneau, AK 99801
907.586.9702 • (Fax) 907.364.3805

Supporting Alaska's Public Schools: Federal Priorities

Alaska's public schools depend on stable, predictable, and targeted federal investments that supplement state and local funding while preserving local decision-making. These priorities reflect Congress's longstanding commitments to students, families, and communities across Alaska.

Protect E-Rate

E-Rate has successfully connected schools and libraries to affordable broadband for nearly 30 years and remains an essential program serving schools and libraries in communities across Alaska. Congress should preserve E-Rate as a connectivity program and ensure schools continue to have the flexibility to meet their local technology needs.

- Preserve E-Rate as a connectivity program and oppose proposals that redefine its purpose beyond broadband access and network infrastructure.
- Maintain local decision-making so school districts can determine how best to use connectivity and technology to support instruction, operations, cybersecurity, and student learning.
- Ensure E-Rate continues to support schools in every community, recognizing that reliable broadband is especially critical for rural and remote districts where connectivity options are limited.
- Protect the long-term stability of E-Rate by preserving the Universal Service Fund and maintaining stable, predictable funding for schools and libraries.

Reduce Barriers to Recruiting International Educators

Alaska school districts, like many districts across the nation, rely on internationally recruited educators to fill persistent vacancies in critical shortage areas. Proposed federal visa integrity fees would substantially increase recruitment costs for school districts already facing severe workforce shortages and could reduce access to qualified teachers in hard-to-staff communities.

- Support a national interest exemption for education related to the proposed $100,000 visa integrity fee for internationally recruited educators working in documented shortage areas.
- Recognize educator shortages as a national workforce challenge and ensure federal immigration policies support—not hinder—the recruitment and retention of qualified teachers.
- Avoid imposing additional financial barriers on school districts that rely on internationally recruited educators to maintain educational services for students.

Protect Title Programs and IDEA Funding

Title programs and IDEA represent longstanding federal commitments that help ensure all students have access to a high-quality public education. Alaska districts rely on these funds to support students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, English learners, educator development, academic enrichment, school safety, and other essential services.

- Protect and strengthen funding for Title I, II, III, and IV, as well as IDEA.
- Oppose reductions or consolidations that weaken dedicated support for students, educators, and schools.
- Fulfill the long-standing federal commitment to fully fund IDEA. Current federal funding remains below 13% of the promised 40% federal share.
- Preserve formula-based funding that provides stable, predictable resources for school districts, and oppose consolidating Title programs into broad block grants that reduce accountability and dedicated support for students.
- Maintain dedicated federal programs that ensure funding reaches the students and communities Congress intended to serve while preserving local decision-making, transparency, and accountability.

Protect Alaska Native Education Program Funding
The Alaska Native Education Program provides culturally relevant, place-based support that is especially important in Alaska. Folding ANEP into a broad block grant would risk losing a dedicated federal commitment to Alaska Native students and communities.

- Maintain ANEP as a distinct, dedicated funding stream.
- Recognize the federal trust responsibility and the unique educational needs of Alaska Native students.
- Support programs that strengthen language, culture, identity, literacy, and academic success.

Support Educator Recruitment and Retention
Alaska continues to face significant educator shortages driven by geography, housing costs, and a limited workforce pipeline. Federal policy should strengthen efforts to recruit, prepare, and retain highly qualified educators, particularly in rural and hard-to-staff communities.

- Support grow-your-own, teacher residency, registered apprenticeship, and loan forgiveness programs that strengthen the educator pipeline.
- Ensure rural and remote school districts have equitable access to federal educator workforce initiatives.
- Support a national interest exemption for education related to the proposed $100,000 visa integrity fee for internationally recruited educators working in documented shortage areas. Alaska districts and districts across the nation rely on international teachers to fill persistent vacancies in hard-to-staff subject areas and rural communities.

Maintain Impact Aid and Protect Federally Impacted Districts
Impact Aid is especially important in Alaska because federal lands and federal activities limit local tax bases while still creating real educational responsibilities for districts.

- Maintain and strengthen Impact Aid.
- Oppose changes that reduce payments or shift federal obligations onto state and local taxpayers.
- Ensure federal policy recognizes Alaska's unique Impact Aid structure and the consequences of Alaska's disparity test.
- Protect districts serving military-connected students, students living on federal property, and communities with limited taxable land.

Secure Long-Term Reauthorization of Secure Rural Schools
Secure Rural Schools funding remains essential for rural and forested Alaska communities. Short-term extensions help, but districts and municipalities need long-term predictability.

- Support long-term or permanent reauthorization of Secure Rural Schools.
- Recognize that SRS helps offset lost local revenue in communities with significant federal lands.
- Provide reliable, long-term funding so rural districts can plan staffing, transportation, and core student services.

Maintain a Functional U.S. Department of Education
Local control does not mean eliminating the federal role. Districts need timely distribution of funds, clear guidance, civil rights enforcement, technical assistance, and predictable program administration.

- Support local decision-making while maintaining a functional federal education agency.
- Oppose disruptions that delay funds already built into district budgets.
- Ensure any restructuring protects students, preserves timely payments, and includes meaningful consultation with states and districts.

Federal education funding is an investment in Alaska's students, workforce, military families, tribal communities, rural infrastructure, and the long-term success of our state. Thank you for your continued partnership in supporting Alaska's public schools and communities.

Support School Meal Programs

School meal programs provide essential nutrition to students and enable them to succeed in the classroom. Districts are facing significant financial and operational challenges with these programs as grapple with high costs, insufficient federal reimbursement and increasingly complex regulations. Insufficient investment is placing additional strain on district budgets and limiting their ability to strengthen meal quality and program operation.

- Increase the federal school meal reimbursement rate to cover the cost of producing reimbursable meals.
- Expand the Community Eligibility Provision by increasing the multiplier to 2.5.
- Ensure any new regulations provide flexibility for districts to operate programs within their local context and recognize student acceptance as a key measure of success.

Federal education funding is an investment in Alaska's students, workforce, military families, tribal communities, rural infrastructure, and the long-term success of our state. Thank you for your continued partnership in supporting Alaska's public schools and communities.