2025 Nome Public Schools Board of Education
Legislative Priorities

## 2025 State Legislative Priorities

The Nome Public Schools Board of Education has chosen the following priority areas for the 2024-2025 Legislative Session. We will focus our advocacy efforts with the Alaska Legislature around the following:

- Early, Predictable and Full Funding for a High Quality Education

The Board supports full and predictable funding for a high quality education for all students, which should provide revenue to cover the actual cost of education in all districts, allows for inflation and increasing costs, and includes all initiatives, laws and mandates that require additional costs and services, such as the Alaska Reads Act. In addition, forward funding and early notification of funding is crucial to allow for recruitment and retention of quality educators and administrators in today's challenging job market. The Base Student Allocation should be adjusted to in order to keep up with the inflation rate since 2011, inflation-proofed, and therefore provide competitive salaries, keep up with the costs of energy and supplies, and allow for any increases in the cost of health insurance and other employee benefits. Nome Public Schools would also support a regular review and recommendation for changes in the District Cost Factor in the foundation formula.

- Funding of School Capital/Major Maintenance Projects

Nome Public Schools currently has well over $6 million dollars in needed capital improvement projects, due to aging facilities and systems for buildings, several of which were opened in the mid-1960's. Reinstatement of school bond reimbursements and full funding of projects submitted through the Capital Improvement Program are crucial to ensuring our school facilities are safe and providing the best possible environment for learning. The Capital Improvement Program scoring system should also be revamped to recognize the cost of continually updating the applications to remain competitive which places an undue burden on smaller districts.

The Major Maintenance Fund should also be allowed as a funding mechanism for repairs to teacher housing for those Districts who must provide and maintain housing in rural areas where few or no other options exist for teaching staff; while the School Construction Fund should be allowed as a funding mechanism for building new teacher housing projects in rural areas where few other housing options exist, and where the cost often exceeds the available funding through the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation's Teaching/Healthcare/Public Safety Housing grant program.

- Attracting and Retaining Quality Educators and Administrators

Teacher and leadership turnover hampers progress on district initiatives and negatively impacts student achievement. Alaska students deserve knowledgeable, stable, and committed teachers, principals and support staff, who are culturally grounded in their local communities. Turnover of less than 10% annually is critical to allow programmatic changes to take hold and produce desired results in the long term. Programs and professional development to grow equity leadership are crucial in making changes to a system we acknowledge has not always served our children well. Alaska's salaries and retirement system are no longer competitive or attractive to teachers from the lower 48, and we are currently utilizing non-traditional teachers, which often require additional support from colleagues and administrators. Equitable and inflation-responsive funding of school districts to provide competitive salaries and wages in response to the high cost of living in many areas in the State, control of health care costs, follow through on commitments to the TRS/PERS pension systems, and high quality teacher preparation programs through the University system are all key to developing Alaska's teacher workforce.

Reducing the barriers to international teacher candidates in Alaska is also crucial, given the rapidly shrinking pool of US-based educators. Repealing the requirement for a Social Security Number to receive an Alaska Teaching Certificate would allow these candidates to receive their certification early in the visa application process, shortening the length of time for this process and increasing their chances for receiving a full-length visa.

- Culturally Responsive Education and Language Revitalization

Culturally responsive classrooms and school settings are foundational and fundamental to any school with a high percentage of Alaska Native students. Our students deserve to see their culture, language and knowledge as an integral part of everyday instruction. It is crucial to the achievement of Alaska Native students when identity is validated through content and methods, and they are motivated and successful when they see themselves reflected in their classrooms and schools. Curriculum which reflects students' cultural identity is often lacking in schools, as textbooks and supplemental materials reflect Western views and values. Modifying curriculum and supplemental materials requires additional time and funding, but results in students who feel engaged and connected to their schools.

- Social, Emotional and Mental Health of Children

The long-term impact of the pandemic on the social, emotional and mental health of our children has turned the spotlight on the need for support and funding for school counselors, social workers, and school psychologists, as well as professional development for educators and families in trauma-sensitive and trauma-preventative practices. Schools must now assist children in regulating emotions, developing coping skills, and forming strong positive relationships with adults. Recent efforts focused on the social/emotional learning of students must be continued and expanded, especially those based in community partnerships.

Nome Public Schools also embraces the concept of wellness and a whole child approach. Children who are taught to connect their mind, body and spirit through grounding in cultural

beliefs and practices have healthy attitudes and make healthy life choices. We support instruction and curriculum that promote these practices.

- Career and Workforce Development

Nome Public Schools recognizes that the Alaskan and U.S. workforce is undergoing a unprecedented shift and schools must be poised to prepare students for rapidly changing needs, including growth in jobs in infrastructure. The need for qualified individuals with technical skills to meet the needs for general maintenance of Nome and the surrounding rural communities, building projects, the coming deep draft expansion of the Nome Port and the opening of the Graphite One mine will mean our schools must deepen and expand our existing partnerships with local employers and the University of Alaska's Northwest Campus to create more formalized school-to-work pathways including apprenticeships and internships. The Northwest Arctic Career and Technical Center (NACTEC) is a pivotal linchpin in ensuring students from Nome and the Bering Strait Region are prepared to fill these positions and keep economic growth tightly centered and benefiting their home communities.

## 2025 Federal Legislative Priorities

The Nome Public Schools Board of Education has chosen the following priority areas for the 2025 Legislative Session. We will focus our advocacy efforts with the Federal Legislature around the following:

- Increasing the reimbursement for Alaska Rural/Remote communities under the National School Lunch Program to better reflect the costs of employee wages, foodstuffs and shipping costs

- Legislation that supports and/or coordinates with our State Priorities

- Removal of limitations and/or barriers to access federal funds, especially those designed to meet the educational needs of Alaska Native students

- Tribal consultation support from the Office of Indian Education to State Education Agencies to better support individual districts with appropriate guidance