

Examples of School Board–Municipal Collaboration in Alaska and Beyond

Prepared as a public handout for discussion about possible Borough Assembly–School Board collaboration in Lake & Peninsula

Bottom line

The strongest examples are not just places that meet in crisis. They create a predictable structure for meeting, focus on shared issues such as budget and facilities, and use the relationship to reduce surprises, improve advocacy, and make difficult decisions more workable.

What the best examples have in common

- A regular forum: quarterly conferences, annual retreats, or scheduled joint work sessions.
- A practical agenda: budget, capital/facilities planning, legislative priorities, and other matters of mutual concern.
- Clear role boundaries: the school board governs the district, while the assembly/council handles municipal finance and other local government functions.
- A path from discussion to action: a joint resolution, a shared capital plan, an annual forecast, or a follow-up working group.

Alaska examples

Anchorage — the clearest formal model

Anchorage’s model is the strongest formal example in Alaska. Under Anchorage Municipal Charter Article VI, Section 6.04, the Assembly and School Board must meet at least four times each year in public session to discuss financial planning, capital improvement needs, the comprehensive plan, and other matters of mutual concern.

- Success story: the regular relationship has made it possible for the two bodies to take joint positions on major education funding questions.
- In 2025, the Assembly approved a joint resolution with the School Board supporting inflation-adjusted state education funding and noting that a joint Assembly–School Board working group had collaborated on the effort.
- In June 2025, the Assembly also co-signed a joint resolution opposing a proposed state regulatory change that would further limit local governments’ ability to invest in public schools.

Kodiak Island Borough — a rural joint work-session model

Kodiak provides a useful small-borough example of structured joint work sessions. In March 2026, the Kodiak Island Borough School District and Borough Assembly held a public joint work session focused on the FY27 budget, budget submission deadlines, facilities maintenance, and possible school closures.

- Why it matters: these are exactly the kinds of topics that can become more contentious when the two bodies are not talking regularly.
- Potential benefit shown here: joint work sessions can create a public place to compare assumptions, surface issues early, and reduce misunderstanding before formal decisions are made.

North Slope Borough — a broader ‘trilateral’ model

North Slope Borough offers another Alaska example, but with a broader table. Public calendars show a joint meeting between the Borough Assembly and the North Slope Borough School District in 2026, while district materials also show a trilateral meeting model that includes the Assembly, the school district, and Iļisaġvik College.

- Why it matters: this model recognizes that schools, higher education, workforce development, and community sustainability are interconnected.
- Potential benefit shown here: in rural places especially, collaboration can be designed around the larger system, not just around one budget line or one crisis.

A realistic Alaska takeaway

Outside Anchorage, many Alaska examples are more relationship-based and less formalized. That is important in itself. It suggests that Lake & Peninsula would not be unusual if it chose to start with a modest structure such as one annual retreat, one budget/facilities work session, and one or two additional meetings focused on shared priorities.

National examples

Alexandria, Virginia — joint capital planning built into the calendar

Alexandria City Public Schools publicly lists recurring joint City Council/School Board work sessions on the capital improvement program (CIP). Its budget calendar shows a joint work session on the FY2025–2034 CIP, followed by later school board work sessions, public hearings, and adoption steps.

- Success story: joint work before adoption creates better alignment on long-range capital needs instead of waiting until projects become emergencies.
- Potential benefit: joint planning improves transparency around school facilities, timing, and fiscal tradeoffs.

Virginia Beach, Virginia — a shared long-range forecast

Virginia Beach publicly describes its joint City Council–School Board meeting as the kickoff to the fiscal year budget process, with the city budget office and the school division presenting a five-year forecast together.

- Success story: the forecast puts both bodies in the same room at the front end of the budget cycle rather than after positions have hardened.
- Potential benefit: a shared forecast helps leaders discuss pressures, assumptions, and tradeoffs earlier and with a common set of facts.

Manassas, Virginia — school capital needs integrated into the city’s CIP

Manassas offers a useful example of city–school collaboration around capital planning and the annual budget. Official city materials show a joint city/schools capital infrastructure process aimed at making recommendations on public capital needs, and the city’s adopted CIP documentation states that the school system’s CIP is incorporated into the city’s CIP. The city’s budget overview also explains that the School Board presents its recommended budget to City Council during the annual cycle.

- Success story: school capital needs are not treated as a separate conversation; they are folded into the city’s planning and adoption process.
- Potential benefit: this model can reduce duplication, improve sequencing, and make school projects easier to discuss alongside other local priorities.

What these examples suggest is possible for Lake & Peninsula

- Better communication before tensions grow. Regular meetings make it easier to correct misunderstandings early.
- More productive budget conversations. Shared forecasting and joint work sessions help leaders discuss constraints before formal votes.
- Stronger facilities and capital planning. School maintenance, closures, and infrastructure are easier to discuss when both bodies see the same information together.
- Improved external advocacy. When two bodies speak together, they can send a stronger message to the state, the public, and other partners.
- A stronger foundation for difficult decisions. Formal collaboration does not remove disagreement, but it can create enough trust and clarity to make hard decisions more responsibly.

A modest structure Lake & Peninsula could consider

- One annual joint retreat or workshop focused on shared purpose, relationship-building, and priority-setting.
- One joint budget/facilities work session each year before key decisions are finalized.
- One or two shorter follow-up meetings focused on progress, emerging issues, and communication.
- An issue-specific working group when needed for topics such as school sustainability, facilities, transportation, or legislative advocacy.

Selected public sources

Source note: This briefing is based on publicly available materials from the Municipality of Anchorage; Kodiak Island Borough School District and BoardBook; North Slope Borough and North Slope Borough School District; Alexandria City Public Schools; the City of Virginia Beach; and the City of Manassas, including charter language, meeting calendars, agendas, budget calendars, capital improvement program materials, and official press releases.