



# **Where We Stand 2016**

AASB Belief Statements and Core Resolutions with new resolutions and amendments adopted by the AASB membership on Nov. 8, 2015 and including amendments recommended by the AASB Board of Directors on July 23, 2016



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## **AASB Mission Statement**

The mission of AASB is to advocate for children and youth by assisting school boards in providing quality public education, focused on student achievement, through effective local governance.

## **Belief Statements**

Belief Statements are brief philosophical statements about issues the AASB membership believes to be true. They are distinguished from Resolutions in that they are longstanding, universally accepted statements that require no specific action yet underpin the beliefs of the association.

## **GOVERNANCE**

### **B.1 LOCAL GOVERNANCE**

Public education is the responsibility of the states and of the local school boards created by those states. This system of local school board governance is one of the purest examples of democracy in action today in that school boards, as locally elected representatives, are held accountable for public education by the public they serve as locally elected representatives. The mission of the Association of Alaska School Boards is to advocate for children and youth by assisting school boards in providing students with

quality public education, focused on student achievement through effective local governance. *Amended 2003, 2007, 2009*

## **B.2 BINDING ARBITRATION**

Binding arbitration removes decision making from locally elected school boards and puts it in the hands of an outside entity, and allows a third party to determine the salaries, benefits and working conditions of school district employees who bargain collectively. It is the elected school board's responsibility to weigh the consequences of decisions concerning management of school resources. The Association of Alaska School Boards opposes any legislation that provides for binding arbitration as the final step in collective bargaining.

## **B.3 ADVISORY BOARD TRAINING**

State law requires the establishment of advisory school boards in REAA's and allows them in city and borough school districts. School boards have delegated authority and responsibility to those advisory school boards, and are encouraged to provide in-service opportunities and training to local advisory boards to help them become effective contributors to excellence in education in their communities.

## **B.4 SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER TRAINING**

School board members are elected by their local school district citizens based on minimum statewide requirements of eligibility to vote and residency. They are responsible to the public for policy issues and budgets of millions of dollars and are coming under increasing public scrutiny. The Association of Alaska School Boards strongly encourages all school board members to avail themselves of training opportunities to increase their understanding of the issues confronting their district, to improve their ability to make the decisions required of them and to demonstrate their accountability to the public.

## **B.5 CLASS SIZE**

AASB opposes any legislative mandating of class size or making class size a negotiable item of bargaining. The Alaska Supreme Court has held that class size is not a mandatory subject of collective bargaining. While school boards recognize the advantage of small class size, they must be able to use discretion when weighing the cost of reduced class sizes with other financial obligations and educational needs of a district. Making class size a mandatory subject of collective bargaining might make class size subject to grievance binding arbitration or otherwise diminish board control over staffing levels. Legislative mandates similarly infringe on the discretion of local decision-makers. *Amended 2009*

## **B.6 PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Pledge of Allegiance is an important civics lesson, recited every day across the nation by school children. Each school district shall incorporate the Pledge of Allegiance to our nation's flag in a manner that it sees fit as a regular part of the district's activities, in compliance with AS 14.03.130. Every effort should be made to inform students of the true meaning of this pledge to deepen their interest and understanding of citizenship and civic responsibility in a democratic society. *Adopted 2013 Amended 2015*

## **FUNDING**

### **B.7 EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND FUNDING AS TOP PRIORITY**

Article VII, Sec. 1 of the Alaska State Constitution states that the Legislature shall establish and maintain a system of public schools open to all school age children. Public education is fundamental to democracy and economic advancement of the state. AASB calls upon the Governor and the Alaska Legislature to make sustainable, adequate and equitable funding a top priority for the exemplary education of our youth. *Amended 2003, 2005, 2006, 2008*

## **B.8 UNFUNDED MANDATES**

Schools have been inundated with statutes, regulations and court decisions that require additional services without accompanying appropriations. With limited and decreasing resources due to significant revenue shortfalls, and increasing costs and expectations for services, unfunded mandates result in an overwhelming financial burden for school districts throughout our state. These mandates are invasive to the educational process, limiting local school boards in their flexibility and autonomy to appropriate funds within their district, thus negatively impacting their ability to govern local schools. AASB encourages all policy makers to take responsibility for their mandates by fully funding or repealing them. *Amended 1999, 2015*

## **B.9 MEETING SCHOOL FACILITY NEEDS FOR ALASKA STUDENTS**

AASB believes that the Alaska State Legislature and the Governor must address the constitutionally mandated need for educationally appropriate school facilities and major school maintenance. *Amended 1998, 2002, 2006, 2009, 2014, 2015*

# **CHILD ADVOCACY**

## **Preamble**

As community leaders committed to education and the equal opportunity for each child to achieve his/her potential, **we** act on behalf of all children for the good of the community; and **we** act on behalf of each child. **We** accept our responsibility and its challenge of finding viable and relevant solutions to the myriad of problems facing children today. **We** believe that while parents bear primary responsibility for the education of their children, it takes a whole community to educate a child. **We** encourage parents and guardians, the legislature, tribal governments, agencies, organizations, businesses, communities, congregations, and extended families to willfully commit to the development of each child. Together **we** will identify and clearly articulate the needs of our children, and together **we** will implement effective solutions and achieve measurable results. Together, **we** will share in the rewards that an emotionally healthy, educated, and vital citizenry will contribute to the future of Alaska. To fulfill our role in the shared responsibility of educating children, **we** are resolved to pursue the following resolutions. *Amended 2002, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2012*

## **B.10 CHILD ADVOCACY MISSION STATEMENT**

The advocacy role of school board members is to promote parental, public and social service commitment to the shared responsibility of educating all children and youth in public education. *Amended 1998*

## **B.11 LANGUAGE, CULTURAL AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY**

Alaska is a vast state and is populated by persons of diverse cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds. Our schools must promote an environment that respects the ethnic, linguistic and cultural identity of the student populations. AASB honors and celebrates those languages and cultures indigenous to Alaska, and supports those efforts that integrate indigenous languages and ways of knowing into the delivery of academic programs. *Amended 1998, 2007, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2015*

## **B.12 INCREASE IN FAMILY AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLS & EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS**

AASB believes, and research supports the belief, that one of the most important factors in student achievement is parental, family and guardian involvement in the educational process, both at home and in the schools. AASB feels that family involvement in the education of children is the highest priority and strongly encourages school districts to be proactive and engage families in a culturally responsive way. *Amended 2003, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2012*



### **B.13 SUPPORTING SOBRIETY**

AASB encourages our Board Members, school staff, students, parents and community members to help in overcoming our communities' affliction with alcohol and drugs. AASB supports efforts of schools and communities to become and remain free of alcohol and drug abuse through activities that: encourage the formation of sobriety groups in every Alaska community; encourage the practice of healthy lifestyles, values and activities; support existing groups working to promote sobriety; educate students on the consequences of their actions; and encourage and support sober role models. *Amended 2007, 2010, 2013*

### **B.14 PREVENTION/EARLY INTERVENTION**

AASB believes in the prevention aspects of health and social service programs. Prevention is cost effective, both in dollars and in reducing human suffering. Many of the social and health problems we are experiencing now will only continue to grow if effective prevention/intervention programs are not in place. AASB supports early identification of and intervention for children at risk and inclusion of parents and guardians and community partners in prevention and intervention services. *Amended 2002, 2006, 2008*

### **B.15 PROHIBITING PERSONS CONVICTED OF SEXUAL ABUSE FROM SERVING ON SCHOOL BOARDS**

School board members should serve as role models for students and staff. AASB believes that persons convicted of sexual abuse should be legally prohibited from serving on school boards, REAA boards, and advisory school boards. *Amended 1998, 2007, 2008, 2013*

### **B.16 DECLARING CHILDREN THE TOP PRIORITY OF ALASKA**

AASB believes children are the top priority of our state. This declaration extends to the safety, health, education and future of our children. *Adopted 2005, Amended 2006, 2008*

### **B.17 (New) EQUITY IN EDUCATION**

**All children must have access to an educational program that meets their individual physical, academic, social and emotional needs. The Association of Alaska School Boards believes that the allocation of educational resources must provide equity for every student regardless of their economic status, geographic location or the economies of scale.** (Remember following belief statements accordingly).

## **PERSONNEL**

### **B.17 ALASKA NATIVE TEACHER HIRE & RETENTION**

Studies have shown that Native teachers have had a very positive effect on Native students. The hiring and retention of qualified Alaska Native teachers has long been supported by educational and Native organizations. AASB strongly urges school districts to recruit qualified Native teachers and administrators. Colleges and universities within the state are encouraged to more actively recruit Native students and to develop Indigenous certification programs designed to build on the strengths of indigenous pedagogies. Local school districts, with the help of the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, are encouraged to provide leadership in developing programs to encourage Native students to choose education as a field of study, and to make every effort to foster the hiring and retention of Native teacher aides and teachers. *Amended 2010, 2011*

### **B. 17(a) QUALITY STAFF IMPROVES STUDENT LEARNING**

High-quality, highly motivated, culturally responsive and innovative teachers, administrators and other staff are essential for successful student learning. *Amended 2015*

## **EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

### **B.18 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

All children should have rich learning opportunities during the formative early childhood years. The Association of Alaska School Boards therefore supports and encourages districts and/or communities to develop early childhood programs, which include parent and family involvement. *Amended 1998, 2007, 2012, 2015*

### **B.19 EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT**

AASB believes the elements of a quality educational improvement effort should address the following key areas:

- **Parental Involvement:** Should encourage a high degree of parental involvement in all aspects of their child's education; collaboration on societal issues outside schools that impact children's learning (schools and various agencies must collaboratively plan to provide services to children to effectively meet their needs); and accountability to the public to assure desired results – a "world class" education.
- **Community engagement:** Should involve many different sectors of the community in the schools to broaden the experience afforded students and promote the shared responsibility of adults in our communities in supporting Alaska's youth to achieve academic success, engage in positive, thriving behaviors, and reduce unhealthy behaviors and foster the growth of children who are grounded in their cultural identity.
- **Student Standards:** Should include the development of educational programs to meet high standards and identified competencies (they should be delivered by a variety of means that meet the diverse educational and cultural needs of students and prepare them to be contributing and productive citizens in a rapidly changing world).
- **Professional Standards:** Should include the highest standards of professionalism by school employees throughout the district.
- **Learning Environment:** Should include adequate and appropriate space, furnishings, equipment, supplies and technology, and be reflective of the cultures of the community. *Amended 1998, 2010, 2011, 2015*

### **B.20 CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY**

The strength of our democracy rests in large part on the success of our public schools in educating all young Alaskans in a deep understanding our democracy from the local to the national level. This understanding includes a working knowledge of evolving governmental principles and structure through the international level, and the importance of citizenship and civic responsibility, including meaningful student government experiences. These lessons should begin in preschool and continue through all the school years. Lessons should, in total, provide strong grounding for fully informed and involved citizenship. It is the duty of each generation to teach the next how democracy works. *Adopted 2008, Amended 2010, 2012*

# AASB CORE RESOLUTIONS

## GOVERNANCE

### **1.1 OPPOSING MANDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT OR LOCAL SCHOOL CONSOLIDATION**

AASB is opposed to mandated school district or local school consolidation because it would greatly reduce local control for a significant number of school districts in Alaska.

**Rationale.** In 2004 the Alaska Local Boundary Commission (LBC) and Department of Education & Early Development (EED) completed a report, which suggests only marginal savings by consolidation of school districts. AASB continues to seek and engage in cooperative and shared service opportunities, thereby creating a significant savings of state tax dollars for all involved.

The concept of cooperation and shared services, as an alternative to mandated consolidation, ensures local autonomy and decision-making is preserved. AS.14.14.115 provides a grant program that encourages the sharing of services to recognize cost economies. Some communities and school districts have considered it viable to consolidate, and have done so through their own volition as a local decision. Others currently participate in shared administrative services, including purchasing and other business functions, and should be applauded and encouraged in their efforts to achieve efficiencies.

No evidence has been provided to support the proposition that significant savings or improved student learning would result from the indiscriminate combining of school districts or schools. Studies on school consolidation imply an imperceptible savings. Public perception may be different. School boards are encouraged to involve the public more thoroughly in efforts to explain their budget and to seek input throughout the budgeting process. *Amended 1999 & 2003, 2015 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

### **1.2 OPPOSITION TO MANDATED BOROUGH FORMATION**

AASB continues to oppose mandatory formation of boroughs. A mandatory borough act reduces the current level of local responsibility and control by encouraging the elimination of small REAA districts and small city districts, and would also reduce the level of local control of education, as it exists today.

**Rationale.** Local communities may differ in their values and the priorities associated with the delivery of educational services.

A mandatory borough act ignores the economic reality of the lack of an adequate tax base in some rural areas of the State. If the state wishes to require local communities to contribute financially, the legislature already has the statutory authority to implement a tax in the unorganized borough. Creating an additional level of local government may not produce the desired effect. *Amended 2001, 2003 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

### 1.3 MAINTAINING LOCAL CONTROL IN CHARTER SCHOOL FORMATION

AASB recognizes charter schools as a locally developed alternative to the standard education program. AASB urges the Department of Education & Early Development to work in partnership with local school districts in the formation of new charter schools. AASB supports charter schools as long as the local school board:

- (a) Retains the sole authority to initiate the approval or rejection of the charter,
- (b) Retains options to terminate the charter of any school that fails to meet criteria set forth in the charter or as otherwise specified by the local school board;
- (c) Maintains authority to require and enforce accountability, including determining the criteria, standards, or outcomes that will be used in establishing the charter;
- (d) Ensures that a charter does not foster racial, social, religious or economic segregation or segregation of children with disabilities.

**Rationale.** Section 14.12.020 in Title 14 of the Alaska Education Laws states that a school district shall be operated under the management and control of a school board. HB 278, adopted in 2014, interjected the Department of Education & Early Development as an authorizing agency of charter schools whose formation was rejected at the local level. *Amended 1998, 1999, 2003, 2011, 2014 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

### 1.4 OPPOSE SCHOOL VOUCHERS

The Association of Alaska School Boards is opposed to using public tax dollars to finance private schools, parochial schools, or private home school/correspondence programs, whether through vouchers, tax credits, or individual K-12 savings accounts, or any other funding that would divert funds from public education.

**Rationale.** Public schools educate every child, regardless of race, ability, religion, economic circumstance, or special needs. Public schools, through their elected school boards, are directly accountable to the citizens of the community for the expenditure of public funds. Taxpayer-funded vouchers for private, parochial, or home school tuition and fees drain scarce resources from public classrooms and diminish revenues available for public schools. Vouchers may raise local taxes if state appropriation is insufficient.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in June 2002 that a voucher program in Ohio did not violate the U.S. Constitution. Referenda in other states have turned down vouchers. The Alaska Supreme Court has held that the following provision of the Alaska Constitution, a restriction independent of the U.S. Constitution, bars disbursement of public funds for the purchase of private or parochial education:

*“The legislature shall by general law establish and maintain a system of public schools open to all children of the State, and may provide for other public educational institutions. Schools and institutions so established shall be free from sectarian control. No money shall be paid from public funds for the direct benefit of any religious or other private educational institution.”*

(Alaska Constitution, Section 1. Public Education.)

In addition, voucher funding tied to students could not fully ensure students or taxpayers the benefits of accountability measures, like state mandated content and student performance standards, and could not satisfy other state and federal mandates under which public schools are required to operate, without invading the religious and other constitutional freedoms of private and parochial schools. *Amended 2013, 2014, 2015 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

## **1.5 CENTRALIZED TREASURY: DISTRIBUTION OF ALLOCATED FUNDS FOR SCHOOLS AND INTEREST EARNED**

AASB urges the Legislature and local governing bodies to assure that all designated funds directed to school districts, including interest earning related thereto, must go to school districts without penalty, and that all interest on school district funds must accrue to the school district.

**Rationale.** Educational funds appropriated by State and local governments are appropriated for the purpose of public education. The efforts of local school districts should be to provide sound planning for future educational needs. Certain municipalities under centralized treasuries have retained state funds allocated to school districts. Some municipalities retain fund balances on school budget monies, and interest accrued on school funds are sometimes held by the municipalities. As it is unclear how interest on school funds are to be distributed, this action will make certain all moneys allocated and earned for schools are used to benefit children. Currently, with a municipal centralized treasury it is possible for school money to be used for things other than education. "Use it or lose it" is a disincentive to utilize educational funds in the most efficient and effective manner. *Adopted 1998. Amended 2002, 2004, 2008 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

## **1.6 (New) SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT**

**AASB supports the goals of the Every Student Succeeds Act, in particular its emphasis on reaffirming local school board authority over public education and limiting federal overreach. AASB urges Congress to fully fund the law.**

**Rationale. ESSA requires the adoption, review and approval of new state plans for education by the 2017-18 school year. These plans must have a statewide accountability system and support and improvement strategies. While the measure of Adequate Yearly Progress in the former law is no longer in effect, accountability systems within each state must cover all students and subgroups of students and include measures of interim academic progress.**

## **~~1.6 SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT (ESEA)~~**

~~AASB urges the legislature and the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development to join AASB in advocating for the reauthorization of a significantly improved federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) by amending the law to replace arbitrary proficiency targets with ambitious achievement targets based on rates of success actually achieved by the most effective public schools. Among our concerns is an over-emphasis of standardized testing; a narrowing of curriculum and instruction to focus on test preparation; the use of sanctions that do not help improve schools; the inherent impossibility of 100 percent of special education and LEP students passing tests at grade level; and inadequate funding. The federal law should be amended:~~

- ~~• To allow states to measure progress by using students' growth in achievement over an expanded period of assessments, as well as their performance in relation to predetermined levels of academic proficiency.~~
- ~~• To ensure state and local control over requirements for "highly qualified" teachers for every class, especially in small schools.~~
- ~~• To ensure that small, rural districts wishing to expand their innovative educational practices with federal funding are not penalized for their lack of administrative capacity to compete for such funding.~~
- ~~• To address school improvement and student achievement goals effectively.~~
- ~~• To ensure that improvement plans are given sufficient time to take hold before applying sanctions.~~
- ~~• To raise the funding of Title I and other programs to levels required by these recommendations without reducing expenditures for other educational programs.~~
- ~~• To continue separate funding for programs in Title VII for the Alaska Native Educational Equity, Support and Assistance Act.~~

- To allow broad flexibility in improvement strategies to tailor response efforts to widely differing reasons for low achievement, especially for very small rural schools.
- To replace punitive sanctions for persistent low achievement with remedial resource availability for identification and remediation of specific actual causes of low achievement.
- To set realistic goals for student achievement on standardized tests, with differentiation of goals for special education students.

**Rationale.** Since passage of NCLB, as amendments to the ESEA in 2001, local school boards have gained substantial experience with its implementation, including the benefits of having rich data about the performance of specific schools and groups of children in their communities. In addition to these benefits, boards have concluded that ESEA places too much emphasis on one way of evaluating schools and students. Among our concerns is an over emphasis of standardized testing; a narrowing of curriculum and instruction to focus on test preparation; the use of sanctions that do not help improve schools; the inherent impossibility of 100 percent of special education and LEP students passing tests at grade level; and inadequate funding. A waiver granted by the Department of Education to the State of Alaska in May of 2013 removed public schools from the accountability model that inaccurately labeled them. In exchange, the state agreed to adopt new English/language arts and mathematics standards, devise its own system for accountability for improving student achievement and develop a new evaluation system for teachers and administrators based in part on student achievement. *Adopted 2006 Amended 2008, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2015 (Sunset Nov. 2016)*

## **1.7 ACCOUNTABILITY AND ADVOCACY FOR STUDENTS OUTSIDE THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM**

AASB urges the Legislature to give State Department of Education and Early Development the authority and funding to register and track the achievement of all school-age children throughout the state who are not enrolled in public schools or private schools that perform assessment substantially equivalent to that performed by the state. Parents of such students should be required to provide information regarding instruction of and progress of their children, to provide accountability that essential skills are being taught and learned. Public school students are already tracked through benchmark exams. AASB supports assessment of all students to see that adequate, essential skills are being provided.

**Rationale.** The goal is to ensure every child receives a quality education. Children receiving an education outside the public school system at home are not required to register or be accountable throughout their education. The State of Alaska has no compulsory law requiring some form of educational plan be filed with the state. Whether by not enrolling or by leaving the school systems of the state, no “safety nets” for students are in place to assure that all students are receiving the benefit and right of an education. No independent or objective testing, including the high school qualifying exam, is required for these students.

Though home schooling can be very effective for some, public schools often receive students who have fallen behind due to failed home schooling or the lack of schooling. Entry of these students into public education puts the receiving districts in a position of providing substantial remedial assistance, while subjecting the students to the same testing and evaluation standards as other students. *Adopted 2000, Amended 2001, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2014, 2015 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

## **1.8 COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE AGE**

Current state law requires compulsory school attendance from age 7-16. AASB supports changing the mandatory age for school attendance to be age 6 to the earlier of either age 18 years old or high school graduation.

**Rationale.** State and local performance standards set high expectations in mathematics, reading and writing for children age 5 through 7. Furthermore, research indicates that earlier education is beneficial. In fact, most children in Alaska are enrolled by the age of 6.

Most 7-year-old kids are in first or second grade. With the renewed emphasis on reading, writing, and mathematics skills in the first few years, skills on which the child will be assessed, children starting school late are at a big disadvantage.

Sixteen-year-olds are not ready to make the enormous decision to give up a high school education. Increasing the mandatory age to 18 helps ensure that students who have not yet graduated from high school and are too young to make the life-changing decision to forego basic education will stay in school and have more opportunities to meet performance standards. Mandatory attendance laws must be enforced, but the best way to keep students in school is to fund and provide education programs that engage students. *Adopted 2001, Amended 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2009, 2014, 2015 (Sunset Nov. 2016)*

### **1.9 ACCOUNTABILITY FOR STUDENT ATTENDANCE**

AASB urges the Department of Education and Early Development and enforcement agencies to work with districts to support compulsory school attendance laws and provide adequate funding for enforcement efforts as a matter of child welfare and public safety.

**Rationale.** Research has documented that poor school attendance is one of the greatest predictors of student failure; yet traditional truancy enforcement efforts are expensive and ineffective. Passive enforcement, tying certain privileges and benefits of state residency to compliance with the minimal, but critical, obligation to ensure that students go to school, seems likely to be cost-effective and successful and is well worth a try. *Adopted 2009, Amended 2010, 2014, 2015 (Sunset Nov. 2019)*

## **FUNDING**

### **2.1 SUSTAINED, RELIABLE AND ADEQUATE STATE FISCAL PLAN AND EDUCATIONAL FUNDING FOR ALASKA'S STUDENTS THROUGH A NON-VOLATILE FUNDING SOURCE**

The sustainability, reliability and adequacy of Alaska's funding for public education are of highest concern to the Association of Alaska School Boards. AASB urges the Legislature to develop a state fiscal plan. This fiscal plan would provide a long-term approach to funding the costs of public education and other services upon which Alaska's students and their families depend. The plan should be strategic, sustainable and realistic, providing a framework for balancing budgets while adequately funding public education.

**Rationale.** The State of Alaska provides a wide range of services to a diverse population spread over a logistically complex area. A long-term plan that ensures reliability of funding for education and other state services that impact the delivery of education, regardless of variation in volatile resource markets, is needed to provide a stable business climate and to ensure the citizens of necessary services. *Adopted 2002, Amended 2004, 2015 (Sunset Nov. 2017)*

## **2.2 URGING ADEQUATE, EQUITABLE, AND PREDICTABLE FUNDING OF PUBLIC EDUCATION**

AASB urges the State of Alaska to provide adequate, equitable, and predictable funding of public education. AASB believes that adequate funding should include the following:

- State funding of the TRS-PERS retirement liability;  
An increase to the Base Student Allocation to account for both inflation and adequate pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade education;
- Recognition of the need to keep pupil-teacher ratios to a level in line with research-based best practices;
- Career and technical education.

AASB urges the Legislature to review and recommend appropriate adjustments to AS.14.17.460, District Cost Factors, to ensure equity in school funding.

AASB urges the Legislature to provide stable forward funding that addresses inflation, including the use of an education endowment, to ensure funding predictability. *Adopted 2014*

## **2.3 SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS**

AASB urges permanent reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act (SRSCA) by the U.S. Congress as a key component of federal financial assistance to local governments and school districts in Alaska. This law recognizes the need for sustained funding to school districts that have non-taxable national forest lands within their boundaries.

**Rationale.** The Secure Rural Schools Act is critically important to 24 of Alaska's 54 school districts (44% of all districts), which have relied heavily on Secure Rural School funds to supplement local funding for education. Without positive action, 24 Alaska school districts and the communities encompassing these districts will lose \$18 million in revenue, resulting in significant community and district job loss, education program reductions, and major overall economic upheaval. In at least one single site school district, 25% or more of the district's revenue would be lost.

In 1908 Congress passed a law, which formed a compact with counties, boroughs and parishes in rural America where the National Forests are located. That compact stipulated that the Forest Service would share 25 percent of its revenues with local governments to support roads and schools. The program impacts our school districts and the welfare of our students in more than 600 rural counties as federal payments-in-lieu-of-taxes to jurisdictions with forestlands and reserves.

The uncertainty of whether the program will be continued from year-to-year is impacting local budget allocations for education funding. (In 2000, Congress passed the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act to address the negative effects of declining federal receipts on local governments. Since 1908, the federal government has shared a portion of the revenues generated on public forestlands with local governments

It is imperative that this act is permanently reauthorized for the many national forested counties, boroughs and school districts that have little ability to generate local tax revenue to support schools and roads. *Adopted 2011, Amended 2012, 2014 (Sunset Nov. 2016)*

## **2.4 ENCOURAGING THE LEGISLATURE TO FUND A GRANT PROGRAM FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES**

AASB encourages the Alaska Legislature to provide grant funding for improvement of school performance as originally designed in AS 14.03.125, under the mechanism



already detailed to support 14.03.125 in Alaska Administrative Code 33.200 through 4 AAC 33.290.

**Rationale.** The grant funding could be targeted on strategies that address low academic student performance, such as grants for early learning and pre-literacy programs, research-based targeted intervention programs, systemic initiatives, teacher retention programs and graduation rate improvement strategies.

A fund for the improvement of school performance, AS 14.03.125, was created by the Legislature in 1990, for grants by the Commissioner of Education & Early Development to school districts. It has never been funded by the Legislature. The settlement of 3AN-04-9756 CI, Kristine Moore et al. V. State of Alaska, established a fund for improving the performance of 40 schools in the state. The Legislature funded that agreement and a grant system for school improvement strategies. *Adopted 2012. (Sunset Nov. 2017)*

## **2.5 AASB ADVOCACY ON INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN EDUCATION ACT (IDEA)**

Following passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, AASB will monitor and advocate the following:

1. Increase in funding to fully fund the federal mandate.
2. Resolution of differential treatment and discipline for special education students.
3. Provision for adequate staffing/teacher preparation.
4. Establishment of post-secondary educational programs to train additional individuals as certified special education teachers and related services providers (i.e. school psychologists, physical therapists, and speech therapists).
5. Decrease in current high staff turnover.
6. Provision for teacher liability/legal protections for advocates.
7. Placement of students and delivery of services.
8. Mediation between school districts and parents when disagreements develop over student placements.
9. Reduction of massive required paperwork.

**Rationale.** AASB joins with the National School Boards Association in urging Congress to fairly and fully fund this federal mandate. IDEA was enacted in 1975 when the federal government committed to paying for each child with disabilities an amount equal to 40 percent of the national average cost of educating students with disabilities. According to the National School Boards Association, federal funding accounts for approximately 18% of the necessary funding. The remainder comes directly from the regular instructional program of local school districts. The total under-funding of IDEA was estimated at \$8.3 billion in fiscal year 2008.

Local school officials must be empowered to preserve a productive and safe learning environment free of undue disruption or violence. Consistent discipline requirements and procedures are the keys to a safe environment. Issues such as discipline and excessive paperwork are having a negative impact on educators; as a result fewer certified personnel are willing to teach in special education programs. *Adopted 2000. Amended 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2005, 2009, 2012 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

## **2.6 FUNDING FOR EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS IN ALASKA**

AASB supports legislation to add additional funding for the planning and programming of voluntary early learning and family support programs, including online programs, for all children from birth to school age as an important long-term investment in Alaska's future workforce and citizenry.

**Rationale.** State and local performance standards set high expectations in mathematics, reading and writing for children age 5 through 7. Research indicates that earlier education is critical for many children to successfully reach those expectations. Even in communities which have Head Start programs, the program is usually unable to accommodate all children who qualify. Strict Headstart income requirements deprive many pre-schoolers who could benefit from the program. Appropriately housed early learning programs should be an integral part of district curriculum. Inclusion of early learning in a school has an impact on facilities planning and would be a wise use of state funds.

The state offers only very limited pilot funding for early-learning education. Many communities do not meet the qualifications for federal Head Start or early-learning funding and sources of present federal funding are uncertain. Most existing early-learning programs cannot afford certificated early-learning teachers. Programs such as Parents as Teachers and Best Beginnings can reap huge educational benefits for very little money. *Amended 2001, 2002, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2013, 2014, 2015 (Sunsets Nov. 2018)*

## **2.7 FUNDING FOR INTENSIVE NEEDS PRE-SCHOOL AND OTHER INTENSIVE NEEDS STUDENTS ENROLLING POST-COUNT DATE OR LEAVING A DISTRICT IN A SINGLE YEAR**

AASB supports prorated funding for preschool students with intensive needs who turn three years old after the October count date, thereby becoming eligible for enrollment and enrolling in public school after state funding has become fixed. In addition, pro-rated funds must also be provided for all other intensive needs students enrolling after the count date. AASB also urges the Alaska Legislature to pass legislation that holds districts harmless when losing a large percentage of intensive needs students in a single count period.

**Rationale.** IDEA '97 requires that public schools enroll students with disabilities at age three. These students typically require not only special education services but also extensive related services (speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy). Preschool students with disabilities whose third birthday falls after the October count date incur costs to the district that are not typical of other students enrolling after the count date. The district is required to provide all services identified by the IEP team. Currently, districts receive no funding for these costly services for those intensive-needs children who turn three years old after the state's October count date.

Other intensive-need students who move to a district after the October count date pose a similar financial challenge. The cost to provide federally mandated services to a single intensive needs child is many times the cost of services to a non-special needs child. Districts cannot be expected to absorb the costs of services for intensive needs children who first enroll after the count date under a budget that provides no funding to satisfy this federal requirement. Supplemental funding for post-count date intensive needs students is critical. At the same time, districts that have lost intensive needs students through transfers have already entered into binding contracts with staff and cannot easily avoid that continued cost. *Adopted 2003, Amended 2004, 2005, 2006, 2009, 2012, 2014 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

## **2.8 FOLLOWING THE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT PRIORITY LISTS FOR NON BONDED PROJECTS**

AASB supports following the priority lists for non-bonded projects as presented by the Department of Education and Early Development and providing funding with no adjustments, deletions, or additions that would not otherwise be of an emergency basis. AASB strongly encourages the legislature and administration to make significant progress on eliminating the statewide capital project and major maintenance backlog. Enactment of AS 14.11.025 (State aid for School construction in regional educational attendance areas) is a good step in that direction and is applauded by AASB.

**Rationale.** The Capital Improvement Projects list goes through a very comprehensive prioritization process developed and implemented, based on need, by the Department of Education and Early Development. AASB encourages the Legislature to follow the prioritized lists and recognize that fluctuations in enrollment cause many districts to face varying economies of scale when maintaining educational facilities. The creation of the school fund for REAA facility construction in 2010 will enable the state to create a pool of funding, up to \$70 million a year beginning in mid-2012, for construction and major maintenance in rural Alaska. *Adopted 2000, Amended 2001, 2004, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2012 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

## **2.9 LOCAL CONTRIBUTION IN THE SCHOOL FUNDING FORMULA**

AASB supports retaining in the school funding formula the local option of establishing a local contribution based on 45 percent of basic need for borough and municipal school districts.

**Rationale.** The current education funding formula was developed with statewide support for all school age children. It allows for a minimum local contribution of the lesser of 2.65 mills or 45% of basic need. *Adopted 2001, Amended 2004, 2005, 2012 (Sunset Nov. 2016)*

## **2.10 EDUCATION ENDOWMENT**

AASB lends its full support to the concept of an adequately funded and well-managed educational endowment to help secure stable and full funding for education to be used for public elementary and secondary education.

**Rationale.** The funding of public K-12 education in our state is an annual appropriation from the General Fund and is subject to the shifting funding priorities of administrations and legislatures, and the variable level of state revenues. Budgetary cycles have increasingly failed to provide a stable and secure funding source for Alaskan students. An educational endowment will provide a proven, relatively secure, and dedicated fiscal resource to support future public education funding for our state, and allow long-range education planning with confidence in the availability of that resource. *Amended 1998, 1999, 2002, 2007, 2009, 2012 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

## **2.11 EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY**

Because of the global economy of which our youth are a part, AASB urges the state and federal governments:

- a. To strongly encourage state leadership by virtue of student rights to equitable educational opportunity to ensure all classrooms are provided affordable, adequate and equitable broadband access (low-latency terrestrial broadband Internet access) to the national and international information infrastructure.
- b. To implement appropriations or matching grants for instructional technology that would address hardware and software purchases, communication, infrastructure, curriculum expansion and training needs of students and staff,
- c. To fund continuation and expansion of Digital 1:1 efforts for districts and AASB's Consortium for Digital Learning.
- d. To join us in urging Congress to fully fund either the provisions of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 (E-rate program) or a robust educational technology substitute that protects the Universal Service Fund to help provide affordable telecommunications to rural areas.
- e. To assist schools in improving Internet connectivity by using new E-Rate subsidies for construction of low latency terrestrial broadband Internet delivery systems.

**Rationale.** Alaskan students are growing up in a digital age that is allowing access to all global markets. If our students are to thrive in this ever-increasing global economy, K-12 schools must have the tools and trained staff to provide the appropriate education. Currently, a number of schools have seen many of their technology purchases become obsolete, outdated, and inoperable. Teachers are unable to effectively integrate technology in the classrooms due to lack or inadequacy of equipment and/or training. Current school district budgets cannot provide adequate funds to meet existing or future instructional technology needs.

Equality in educational opportunity has always been a goal of the Association of Alaska School Boards. Future economic viability will not depend as much on physical presence, but rather the ability to import, transmit or convey ideas and information electronically. Today's globally competitive economy requires that all schools have access to modern technologies—Internet access, computers, distance learning—that can open new doors of educational opportunity for our school children. Appropriations by the Alaska Legislature in 2006 and 2008 have enabled about half of the state's school districts to pilot intensive digital learning for some of their students as members of the AASB Consortium for Digital Learning. *Amended 1998, 1999, 2001, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2015 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

## **2.12 SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION DEBT RETIREMENT FOR BONDED INDEBTEDNESS**

AASB urges the Legislature and the administration to fully honor the statutory commitments for bonded indebtedness reimbursement by appropriating all funds necessary to satisfy that commitment.

**Rationale.** Article 7, Sec. 1 of the Alaska State Constitution states that the Legislature shall establish and maintain a system of public schools open to all children. Under AS 14.11.100 the State of Alaska commits to repay school districts at set percentage rates for school construction bonded indebtedness in past years. Extending that program into the future helps meet school construction needs in areas of the state that are able to bond. Over the past years many regions of the State have bonded for school construction with the expectation that the State would honor its obligation. *Amended 1998, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2012, 2015 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

## **2.13 REVENUE SHARING**

Municipalities play a large part in financing education and providing community services necessary to student learning. The Association of Alaska School Boards supports restored and increased funding for Municipal Revenue Sharing & Assistance. An increase in community support cannot substitute for necessary increases in direct education funding by the state.

**Rationale.** Support for this program is essential. Without revenue sharing, which was vetoed in 2003, communities were forced to raise taxes to meet the cost of state mandates. Passage of SB 72 in 2008 restored the program with \$60 million in general funds for distribution to communities annually over the next three years. As the level of state revenue collected under AS 43.55.011(g) fluctuates, payments to local governments may go up or down. Revenue sharing as a proportion of the state budget is near its historic low point. Statehood was premised on the notion that state-owned resources would generate tax or other revenue and that this money would be shared with local government because local government could not survive without it. *Adopted 1999, Amended 2000, 2001, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2012 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

## **2.14 PUPIL TRANSPORTATION**

AASB urges the State of Alaska to fully fund pupil transportation by increasing the transportation allocation to more accurately reflect true costs and to avoid the use of operating fund dollars, and provide funding for districts with increased transportation needs due to special circumstances and/or student growth. Getting students safely to and from school is a vital part of public education.

**Rationale.** Passage of SB 182 in 2012 requires the Department of Education & Early Development to establish statewide standards for pupil transportation contracts and to enforce compliance with those standards in 2016. Passage of SB57 in 2013 increases pupil transportation funding at the rate of the Anchorage Consumer Price Index through November 2015, at which time the automatic increase is repealed. *Adopted 2000, Amended 2001, 2002, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

## **2.15 FUNDING FOR SCHOOL DISTRICT-OPERATED REGIONAL BOARDING HOME PROGRAMS**

AASB supports providing adequate funding for locally controlled and operated, regional boarding high schools throughout the state.

**Rationale.** The number of students requesting enrollment at Mt. Edgecumbe School exceeds the space available. Legislation enacted in recent years has increased the state stipend paid for students at district operated boarding schools and expanded the authority for their operation statewide. Districts were also allowed to enter into contracts with Alaska Native corporations for operation of dormitory facilities. *Amended 1997, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2013, 2014 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

## **2.16 FUNDING FOR TRANSIENT STUDENTS IN SCHOOLS**

The Association of Alaska School Boards supports development of a funding mechanism for compensating schools for students entering after the October count date without harming a school that loses a student for which it has already incurred costs.

**Rationale.** Each year, students throughout Alaska enroll in boarding and other schools around the state. Often, students leave schools immediately following the October count. These students generally return to their home districts. Other districts face large influx of military-dependent and resource development project students. The untimely arrival of students after the count date puts the receiving school districts at a financial disadvantage. Districts receiving students after the October count must bear the financial responsibility for educating these students without corresponding funds. Districts losing students after the count date have already committed themselves to legally binding contracts and cannot easily adjust spending levels to account for the loss of those students. *Adopted 2002, Amended 2003, 2008, 2009 (Sunset Nov. 2017)*

## **2.17 INSURANCE COSTS**

AASB urges the Alaska State Legislature to thoroughly investigate pooling arrangements or other funding as a way to mitigate increases in insurance costs for school districts. Districts must be permitted to individually decide to participate if they find the options favorable to their local situation. Districts should be enabled, but not required, to secure larger collaborative group medical service and group medical coverage, as well as value-based payment and procurement methods among public and private sector employees. Negotiation and management authority will be shared with AASB.

**Rationale.** Insurance costs are draining badly needed resources for the classrooms and will continue to do so unless steps are taken to mitigate these uncontrolled increases, which only add to the administrative overhead of all districts. The cost of health and liability coverage, in particular, has added to escalation of fixed costs faced by districts. *Adopted 2002, Amended 2003, 2006, 2007, 2013, 2014 (Sunset Nov. 2017)*

## **2.18 STATUTORY GROUNDS FOR REDUCTION IN FORCE**

Every Alaska school board must be able to make responsible decisions about how to allocate district resources to provide a high-quality education program that meets the needs of students. The Association of Alaska School Boards supports clarification of the language in the law explicitly to allow the use of projections of enrollment, costs and revenues as valid bases upon which to develop a plan for reduction in force under AS 14.20.177. The Association also supports clarification of the law to recognize that school boards have discretion to decide when a reduction in force is necessary for the following year.

**Rationale.** Under the current wording of AS 14.20.177, NEA-Alaska has argued and at least one Superior Court judge has ruled that reductions in enrollment or revenue must have already taken place in order to reduce staff. In addition, NEA-Alaska has argued and a Superior Court judge has ruled that a school board's judgment regarding the necessity of a reduction in force is not its to make; instead, a school district must prove that a reduction in force is necessary.

A school district's ability to respond quickly to a drop in enrollment or negative change in its financial picture is already significantly limited by the fact that mid-year layoffs of teaching staff are not permitted under AS 14.20.177. Neither is an increase in costs a basis for mid-year layoffs. However, school boards should be able to respond to both actual and projected declines in enrollment or funding by developing plans to reduce staff for the following year. School boards should also have the ability to reduce staff in the following year in response to costs increases that are not offset by increases in funding.

A school board's judgment that a reduction in force is necessary is the kind of policy decision that the public elects school boards to make. *Adopted 2003, Amended 2004, 2005, 2006, 2008, 2012 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

## **2.19 LEGISLATIVE FINANCIAL RELIEF FOR ONGOING TRS AND PERS EMPLOYER RATE INCREASES**

The Association of Alaska School Boards supports the cost-share formula requiring the state to pay 87.44 percent of employer costs under the Teachers' Retirement System and 78 percent of the costs under the Public Employees Retirement System. AASB endorses the use of state revenue or other state-managed funding sources to retire the unfunded liability of the public employee retirement systems without supplanting funds needed for the classroom.

AASB categorically rejects the State of Alaska Department of Law's recent determination that the State of Alaska does not have a legal obligation to assume the portion of the liabilities of the State managed Teacher's Retirement System and the Public Employees Retirement System.

**Rationale.** The State of Alaska Division of Retirement & Benefits notified PERS and TRS employers on September 3, 2015 that the State of Alaska does not believe it has an obligation to assume the liabilities of the State managed Teacher's Retirement System and Public Employees Retirement system in connection with the implementation of

Generally Accepted Accounting Standard (GASB) #68 – Accounting and Financial Reporting for Pensions.

The Association of Alaska School Boards believes that the State of Alaska has a long-standing obligation to continue to provide substantial and sustainable financial support of the TRS and PERS retirement systems to ensure that Alaska's school children will be well served by high quality teachers and support staff who know that the State of Alaska remains steadfast and unwavering its support of its teachers, support staff, and their pensions.

Districts simply do not have the capacity to handle the massive unfunded liability of the state's retirement programs. Financially healthy pension funds are an incentive to attracting and retaining high quality employees in the public sector. *Amended 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2015 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

## **2.20 MODIFICATION OF MINIMUM INSTRUCTIONAL EXPENDITURE REQUIREMENT**

AASB requests repeal of the Minimum Instructional Expenditure requirement, (AS 14.17.520) to reflect reasonable thresholds appropriate for districts of various sizes and cost levels.

**Rationale.** While AASB members place the highest priority on funding instruction, the requirement that all districts must spend at least 70% of the district budget on expenditures for teachers and for instruction is arbitrary and does not reflect state and federal mandates and other non-instructional expenses, and ignores the needs and wishes of the community.

For many remote school districts, the minimum instructional expenditure requirement is unrealistic and does not reflect the fiscal reality of sharply increasing energy and other operating costs faced by all school districts.

The State Board of Education & Early Development regularly grants waivers of the minimum instructional expenditures requirement to more than half of Alaska's school districts, recognizing the impacted districts had no fiscal capacity to comply with the law. The administrative burden of making annual waiver requests absorbs critical instructional dollars at the district level as well as needlessly using up statewide administrative resources for review. The EED Board voted in January, 2007, (see resolution 01-2007) to request that the Legislature repeal the 70 percent rule as a waste of resources and duplicative of existing systems for assuring student achievement. *Amended 2004, 2005, 2007, 2008 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

## **2.21 ENERGY COST RELIEF**

AASB urges the Alaska State Legislature to take action to mitigate the huge increase in energy costs facing all school districts. The relief should be based on actual energy costs and be part of an overall program to address conservation of energy, development of alternative energy programs and deferred maintenance of public facilities and buildings.

**Rationale.** School districts incur energy costs for heating, electricity and transportation. In most districts off the road system, those costs can eat up 30 to 40 percent of operating budgets, diverting dollars from instruction. Even when the cost of fuel declines in urban areas, those savings seldom catch up to consumers in rural communities due to lack of a competitive energy market.

Possible relief measures should include initiating an Energy Cost Increase Factor in the foundation formula and/or providing supplemental funding in the year the cost is incurred,

thereby putting funding back in the classroom. *Adopted 2005. Amended 2008, 2010, 2015 (Sunset Nov. 2020)*

## **2.22 RELIABLE AND EFFICIENT SERVICE BY THE ALASKA MARINE HIGHWAY SYSTEM**

AASB urges the State of Alaska to provide or subsidize frequent, reliable, equitable and efficient ferry service to all Southeast, Southwest, and Southcentral communities served by the Alaska Marine Highway System and alternatives such as the Inter-Island Ferry Authority.

**Rationale.** School districts in Southeast and Southcentral Alaska depend on ferry access to provide transportation to and from other communities for numerous academic and athletic activities. The lack of frequent and dependable scheduled ferry service often makes it difficult or impossible to utilize the AMHS in school-sponsored trips. The only alternative for many of the communities served by the AMHS is to arrange travel by air, which markedly increases transportation costs and in some cases causes trips to be canceled entirely. *Adopted 2006, Amended 2007, 2008, 2012, 2013 (Sunset Nov. 2016)*

## **2.23 SUPPORTING BYPASS MAIL IN ALASKA**

AASB recognizes that the Bypass Mail program provides the only timely and economical way to move essential materials to rural Alaska and is critical to the health of the Alaskan economy. Bypass mail allows Alaska to receive the same universal service at universal rates enjoyed by the rest of the country. AASB strongly urges the US Congress to find ways to continue funding the bypass mail program in Alaska.

**Rational:** Federal law establishes mail as a basic and fundamental service and requires the Postal Service to “provide prompt, reliable, and efficient services to patrons in all areas and . . . render Postal Services to all communities.” Legislation proposed by Congress would unfairly single out Alaska, eliminating funding for bypass mail. Bypass mail represents a lifeline to Alaska communities, transporting food, essential medical supplies, educational materials and items critical to the life and safety of Alaskan residents. *Adopted 2011 (Sunset Nov. 2016)*

## **2.24 FUNDING FOR SCHOOLS BY ESTABLISHING THE BASE STUDENT ALLOCATION IN ADVANCE**

AASB supports funding for schools in advance. At a minimum, the Base Student Allocation (BSA) should be established at least one, and preferably three, years ahead to provide sufficient time for school districts to prepare and submit their budgets in a timely manner without spending unnecessary time and resources revising budgets based on legislative action after the local budget process has begun. The Education Fund, AS 14.17.300, must also be maintained and increased for this purpose.

**Rationale.** When state oil revenues are low the amount spent on education might decline, but local school districts would have a full fiscal year to prepare for the reduction in revenue if education funding is established at least a year in advance. Forward funding will provide fiscal stability for districts so they can make long-term decisions, reduce administrative cost and enable school districts to focus on student instruction rather than constant budget revisions.

While early funding of the education budget – i.e., a signed education funding bill within the first 30 days of the session – would also reduce the administrative burden on school districts, the legislature does not receive its revenue projections in time to accomplish that goal. Advance funding – establishing both the BSA and setting aside sufficient funds to cover it a full year in advance – would eliminate the pressure for passage of the



education appropriation early in the legislative session. *Adopted 2006, Amended 2007, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 201, 20154 (Sunset Nov. 2016)*

## **2.25 RECONSTITUTION AND ACTIVE MANAGEMENT OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOL LAND TRUST AND PERMANENT FUND**

AASB supports additional research into reconstitution of the Alaska Public School Land Trust, active management of the trust and working with Alaska Parent Teacher Associations and other educational stakeholders to establish a management board with broad stakeholder representation to that end.

**Rationale.** A promise was made to Alaska public school children on March 4, 1915, when “An Act to reserve lands to the Territory of Alaska for educational uses, and for other purposes,” (38 Stat. 1214, Public Law 63-330/Chapter 181, 63 Congress, Session 3) was approved by Congress and signed by President Woodrow Wilson. PL 63-330 requires when federal lands are surveyed, Sections 16 and 36 in each township shall be and were reserved for the support of common schools in Alaska. *Adopted 2007, Amended 2010, 2014 (Sunset Nov. 2017)*

## **2.26 SUPPORTING EXCELLENCE IN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, ARTS, AND MATH INSTRUCTION**

AASB recognizes and supports national efforts to increase the nation’s scientific and engineering talent pool in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM/STEM) fields. AASB urges the Governor and the Alaska State Legislature to establish a fund or provide grants to invest strategically in STEAM/STEM education, focusing on professional development, materials and equipment needed for active, hands-on learning for K-12 students in classrooms across the state.

**Rationale.** The Alaska Department of Education & Early Development has added science standards and testing requirements, and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act added this requirement in 2010. There is growing recognition that the U.S. must increase its commitment to science and math to retain its competitive advantage in the world. Students learn science best by actively engaging in the practice of science, and they develop cognitive skills needed to excel in science and math through the arts, especially music. Teachers need professional development and science resources to offer students outstanding hands-on, active learning opportunities in the sciences. Science classroom equipment and consumable supplies are unique and expensive. Skyrocketing energy costs and increasing operating costs consume school budgets, limiting the ability of districts to address long-deferred expenses such as science curriculum and equipment. Excellence in STEM fields is vital to Alaska’s and the nation’s long-term economic prospects. *Adopted 2008, Amended 2010, 2012, 2014, 2015 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

## **2.27 RECOMMENDING REVISIONS TO THE STEP-DOWN HOLD-HARMLESS CLAUSE FOR REDUCTIONS IN ADM**

AASB recommends that the Alaska Legislature revise from 5 percent to 2.5 percent the hold-harmless threshold (AS14.17.450) for reductions in average daily membership.

**Rationale.** Passage of HB 273 by the 25<sup>th</sup> Alaska Legislature included a provision that if a school district’s ADM adjusted for school size decreases by 5 percent or more from one fiscal year to the next, the school district may use the last fiscal year before the decrease as a base fiscal year to offset the decrease. The provision includes a step-down clause holding districts harmless for a portion of the ADM decrease during the next three fiscal years, if the 5 percent enrollment decline continues and none of the decline is attributable to a loss of students caused by a boundary change under AS 29.

Under AS14.17.250, school districts that experience enrollment declines of anywhere between 2 and 5 percent would be impacted severely because they would not qualify for the step-down provision. *Adopted 2008, Amended 2015 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

## **2.28 SUPPORTING A REDUCTION IN THE ADM THRESHOLD FOR DETERMINING THE NUMBER OF SCHOOLS FOR FUNDING**

AASB urges the Legislature to amend AS 14.17.905 to reduce to no higher than 41 the community ADM threshold for counting elementary and secondary as two separate schools.

**Rationale.** The current threshold of 101 ADM for counting K-6 and 7-12 as separate schools was established before the federal requirement to have “highly qualified” teachers teaching in all core academic areas. Given the numerous requirements for graduation, it is virtually impossible for small secondary schools to employ teachers who are “highly qualified” in multiple core academic areas or to teach the rigorous curriculum required for the Alaska Performance Scholarship if their funding is reduced by not being funded as a separate school. As currently written, AS14.17.905 does not recognize the financial requirements imposed on small schools to employ “highly qualified” secondary teachers. The Alaska Association of School Administrators has expressly endorsed the 41-student threshold. *Adopted 2008 Amended 2009, 2010, 2013 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

## **2.29 URGING THE STATE TO MITIGATE THE IMPACTS OF UNUSED OR UNDERUTILIZED FACILITY SPACE IN DISTRICTS**

AASB urges the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development or other appropriate agencies to investigate the financial impacts on school districts when reduced enrollment or budget constraints result in unused or underutilized school facilities. AASB urges mitigation of the burden posed by the closure of facilities that still have operational costs associated with them.

**Rationale.** School districts report instances of excess facility infrastructure that were built before advent of state guidelines for construction or because of declining enrollment or both. In some cases, schools have been closed because ADM fell below 10. Excess space must be insured, operated and maintained regardless of whether the funds generated under the foundation formula are sufficient. ~~Even~~ closed schools must be insured and should incur some operation and maintenance expenses to ensure that they will be usable if ADM should later warrant reopening them. *Adopted 2008 Amended 2014 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

## **2.30 URGING THE STATE TO AUDIT ALL SCHOOL BUILDINGS AND CREATE A FACILITY MAJOR MAINTENANCE AND REPLACEMENT LIST**

AASB urges **DEED**, in collaboration with school districts, to develop a state-funded process for a statewide audit of all K-12 public school facilities to, determine which buildings require major maintenance or replacement and which should be retrofitted to be the most energy efficient and sustainable for the 21st Century. The Department of Education & Early Development should conduct the audit at least every five years with special attention to Alaska’s unique construction requirements.

**Rationale.** School districts now submit to the state annually a six-year plan of maintenance and building replacement needs. From those lists, EED establishes a priority list for facility replacement and major maintenance. However, the EED priority list does not give the Legislature a complete picture of the condition of all school facilities in Alaska. A regular auditing process would give EED and the Legislature a schedule of

replacement and maintenance projects statewide needed in the next three years, five years and 10 years. *Adopted 2008 Amended 2009, 2014, 2015 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

### **2.31 URGING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A FUNDING POOL TO HELP FUND TRAVEL FOR STUDENTS TO ATTEND STATE-LEVEL COMPETITIONS**

AASB recognizes that a comprehensive public education includes extracurricular activities such as sports and the arts. Involvement in interscholastic activities has been shown to increase academic achievement. As such, the opportunity for students to participate at state-level tournaments, festivals and competitions is an important component of a well-rounded education. Due to the ever increasing costs associated with travel and lodging for school districts to attend state-level competitions, AASB urges the Alaska School Activities Association, the Alaska Legislature and the Governor to work together to establish a funding pool to help school districts fund travel for students to attend state-level tournaments, festivals or competitions.

**Rationale.** Travel expenses to state-level tournaments and competitions are not normally budgeted by school districts. The preponderance of the burden to fund travel for extracurricular activities has fallen to parents and rural communities that are facing more difficult economic issues and fewer available dollars to support these opportunities. The ASAA and the state should help by establishing a funding mechanism to help students to attend state-level competitions.

In addition, the cost of student activities is significantly more expensive for school districts whose students live off the road system and even more for those schools not on the ferry system and distant from air transportation hubs. The state's appropriate funding to assure student access to the benefits of interscholastic activities should include funding to address access from remote rural schools. *Adopted 2009 Amended 2014, 2015 (Sunsets Nov. 2019)*

### **2.32 URGING THE CONTINUATION OF FUNDING FOR CAREER AND TECHNICAL (VOCATIONAL) EDUCATION**

AASB supports the funding of Career and Technical (Vocational) Education through the foundation formula in AS 14.17.420 and continuation of funding for Alaska Construction Academies and regional training centers.

**Rationale.** Vocational, career tech, and trades offerings help engage students and provide an effective alternate platform for academic education. These courses along with the necessary equipment help middle and high school students learn about and focus on potential career paths to prepare them for post-secondary education and careers in our state. *Adopted 2009, Amended 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014, 2015 (Sunset Nov. 2019)*

### **2.33 SUPPORTING STATE FUNDING FOR SCHOOL MEALS**

AASB supports an adequate financial appropriation from the state to strengthen and expand the National School Lunch and Breakfast Program in Alaska and other programs to be sure that school breakfast programs and a sustainable lunch may be available to all children at all schools throughout the state. Such funding must be accomplished without diverting funds that belong in the educational foundation formula.

**Rationale.** No child should go without breakfast or lunch. The lack of adequate nutrition affects the cognitive and behavioral development of children. Food insecurity, meaning a lack of access at all times to enough food for a healthy, active life, was reported among 15 percent of Alaska children, compared with 11 percent of Alaska adults, in a 2006

study (the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey). The problem is more acute in rural Alaska, where nearly one child in four experienced food insecurity.

The National School Breakfast Program decreases food insecurity in children by providing five healthy meals a week. In Alaska schools, 40 percent of students qualify for free/reduced school meals; of these 45,000 students, 15 percent, or about 7,000 children, do not attend schools that offer a breakfast program. In all, more than 100 public schools in Alaska did not sponsor or offer the federal School Breakfast Program in the 2008-09 school year, due primarily to a lack of funding. *Adopted 2010, Amended 2015 (Sunset Nov. 2020)*

### **2.34 SUPPORTING PARTIAL FOUNDATION FUNDING FOR SCHOOLS WITH SEVEN TO NINE STUDENTS FOR UP TO TWO YEARS**

AASB urges the Alaska Legislature to provide funding for those schools that fall below the minimum number of students for up to two years before a district is required to close a school. AASB supports a revision to AS 14.17.450 providing partial foundation funding for small, rural Alaskan schools with seven (7) to nine (9) students. These schools would be funded for up to two (2) years at the following percentage of the amount that would be funded if the school had ten (10) students:

Seven (7) students	= 70% funding
Eight (8) students	= 80% funding
Nine (9) students	= 90% funding

**Rationale.** The school is often the community center and heart of village life. Education is a constitutional right of all students in Alaska. The Education Clause of Alaska's Constitution (Article VII, Section 1) provides, in relevant part that the "legislature shall by general law establish and maintain a system of public schools open to all children of the State." In small communities, school enrollment often hovers around 10 students. Due to fluctuations in population, the number of students in these schools may drop below 10 one year, then increase above 10 the following year. While it is inefficient to have a school for a small number of students, it is equitable to each child to be schooled in the village of their home.

Unfortunately, with the current funding requirements of AS 14.17.450, schools receive no funding when the enrollment drops below 10 students, which most often results in the closure of the school. When school enrollment hovers around 10 students, no one can predict whether these schools will have ten children enrolled through the entire count period until the last day of that period.

Most of these students cannot commute to a neighboring school. Even considering closing a school creates an exodus of some families and discourages families considering moving to the community. Often, the school is a major community employer and a closure damages the community and any hope of economic viability. This proposal will allow small schools to operate with a partial budget for up to two years, allowing the school and community time to rebound from population fluctuations, rather than closing prematurely and leaving students without a school or teacher. *Adopted 2010 Amended 2014 (Sunset Nov. 2020)*

### **2.35 FOCUS ON GRADE-LEVEL PROFICIENCY FOR KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE THREE STUDENTS**

AASB supports legislative funding opportunities for intervention for K-3 students needing to make improvement to reach grade-level proficiency.

**Rationale.** The April 2011 report of the Alaska Advisory Task Force on Higher Education & Career Readiness stated in part: "Children who receive quality early education arrive at

school ready to learn and perform better in school. They are less likely to need expensive special education interventions, and they are more likely to graduate from high school and to successfully enter the workforce. Research is clear that when students enter kindergarten, 40% of them on average are one to three years behind grade level, and too many of them stay behind throughout their school careers. Alaska can invest a relatively small amount in early childhood and innovative K-12 programs, or a vastly greater amount at the college level. Today's third-grader can't wait for, and our public treasury cannot afford, a remediation response that doesn't begin until the 13<sup>th</sup> grade." *Adopted 2011 Amended 2014 (Sunset Nov. 2016)*

### **2.36 ADDRESSING THE NEED FOR REMEDIATION**

AASB supports the goal of helping students complete high school with sufficient skills to enter the workforce or study at a postsecondary institution, without the need for remedial coursework.

AASB supports legislative funding opportunities for intervention for K-12 students needing to make improvement to reach grade-level proficiency.

**Rationale.** AASB believes that the keys to long-term student success include early childhood development and improved reading, writing, and math skills in K-3 students. Good data show that students who succeed in school become more productive citizens, enhancing their own lives and placing fewer demands on public services, from welfare to prisons. Interventions at every grade level are essential to achieving proficiency and creating a well-trained workforce. *Adopted 2011 Amended 2012, 2015 (Sunset November 2016)*

### **2.37 COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE ENERGY PLAN**

AASB urges the Alaska State Legislature and Administration to develop, fund and implement a comprehensive statewide energy plan that includes current energy sources, conservation of energy and development of alternative energy. The plan should address development of energy efficiency in public facilities and buildings.

**Rationale.** The State of Alaska currently has no comprehensive statewide energy plan in effect. A comprehensive statewide energy plan would reduce costs to all, directly benefitting school districts and ultimately benefitting all citizens. High consumer energy prices deplete funding for other needs, especially in school districts, which are one of the state's largest consumers of energy. The legislature and administration have been generous with energy cost relief in recent years, which school districts appreciate. However, the relief is not addressing the problem of energy, only the symptom—high costs. *Adopted 2012, Amended 2015 (Sunset Nov. 2017)*

### **2.38 DISTRICT COST FACTOR**

AASB urges the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development comply with state statute AS 14.17.460 that requires regular review of District Cost Factors and development of recommendations for appropriate adjustments, to ensure equity in school funding since the current data being used to determine the District Cost Factors are over 10 years old. Elements in establishing District Cost Factors should include not only the true cost of goods and services but also the mix of goods required in all communities.

AASB further urges the Alaska Legislature provide funding for the required District Cost Factor review and update the cost factors, based upon the resulting DEED recommendations. In addition, AASB urges the Legislature to establish an appeals process related to the DEED recommendations and to include a one-year hold harmless and a phased step-down in the event a school district loses funds due to revisions in the

Foundation Formula cost factors. Regular revision of the District Cost Factors is critical to equitable distribution of funding and to address ongoing disparities between districts.

**Rationale.** The Foundation Formula for K12 education recognizes the different costs of providing public education around the state. Changes to AS 14.17.460 enacted in 2008 established a five-year schedule of changes to the cost factors that were phased in completely in 2013. AS 14.17.460 (b) requires the department to monitor cost factors and to prepare recommendations for the Legislature to consider every other fiscal year. *Adopted 2013 Amended 2014, 2015 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

### **2.39 URGING THE STATE OF ALASKA TO FUND ALTERNATIVE MODES OF TRANSPORTATION FOR ALL DISTRICTS**

AASB urges the Alaska Legislature to amend the pupil transportation statute (AS14.09.010) to provide equitable funding of transportation for all school districts.

**Rationale.** In school districts with diverse transportation needs due to the absence of a road system, student travel costs are varied and can be significantly high. State regulations at 4 AAC.27.990 (5) describe vehicles that can be used when a school bus cannot transport students. However, four school districts, Aleutians Region, Chugach, Hydaburg and Pribilof, are not currently eligible for pupil transportation funding because they were not receiving funding in 2003, when AS14.09.010 was amended. *Adopted 2013, Amended 2015 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

### **2.40 URGING THE LEGISLATURE TO CLARIFY FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR PHYSICAL EXAMINATION REQUIREMENTS FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS**

AASB requests the Alaska Legislature to amend Alaska Statute 14.30.070 (b) (physical examinations required) to clarify that schools districts are not required to assume financial responsibility for school entry physical examinations. In addition, any examinations should be made by competent medical professionals to include: Physicians, Physician Assistants, Nurse Practitioners, and specially trained Registered Nurses.

**Rationale.** HB 44 (adopted in 2015) repealed AS 14.30.070(a), a longstanding law that required all students in the Alaska K-12 system to have a physical examination when they enter school. The repealed section AS 14.30.070(a) prescribed that each school district shall “provide for and require” a physical exam, raising questions about which party, the school district or a student’s parent or guardian, is responsible for any examinations. These questions remain. AS 14.30.070 (b) now identifies the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services as the party to require the examinations but does not require reimbursement to districts for the examination costs nor does it provide for parent or guardian responsibility. *Adopted 2014, Amended 2015 (Sunset Nov. 2019)*

### **2.41 URGING A TRANSPARENT PROCESS WITH STAKEHOLDER INPUT AND PRIORITIZATION OF EQUITY CONCERNS IN STATE STUDIES**

AASB urges the responsible agencies to conduct education studies in a transparent process with multiple opportunities for stakeholder input. The studies should use relevant Alaska data from all parts of our diverse state, promote educational best practices, benefit all students in an equitable manner providing an adequate education for all.

**Rationale.** HB 278 authorized four studies, the Department of Administration is to provide a proposal for a salary and benefits schedule for school districts and for teacher tenure; the Department of Education & Early Development is to report to the legislature on school design and construction; and the Legislative Budget and Audit Committee is to

provide for studies on public education funding. These studies need to be done carefully to reflect the variety of needs and costs as even rural districts have varying costs in hub or out-lying villages and best practice is not always the cheapest practice to fund.  
*Adopted 2014 (Sunset Nov. 2019)*

#### **2.42 SUPPORTING THE USE OF FEDERAL IMPACT AID BY AFFECTED DISTRICTS**

AASB supports allowing affected districts to utilize all of the Federal Impact Aid which each districts are eligible for without any deduction made by the State in calculations of state funding pursuant to AS 14.17. The State currently deducts up to 90 percent of the eligible funds for affected districts. The purpose of such Impact Aid funds is to assist school districts with the reduced revenue availability and increased expenditures that arise from qualifying federal activities and enrollment of qualified federally connected children.

**Rationale.** It is important that the Federal Impact Aid that affected districts are entitled to can be used for its intended purpose without further impacting the education of students. Federal impact aid is intended to flow to the district within which the aid is generated. The purpose of Impact Aid is, in general, to provide assistance to local school districts with qualifying numbers of children residing on Indian lands, at military bases, low-rent housing properties, or other Federal properties, and children who have parents in the uniformed services or employed on eligible Federal properties who do not live on Federal property. The intent of the aid is not only to provide funding for lands that might otherwise be taxable but also to provide revenue to the receiving district for the additional costs associated with the education of the students. For example, the cost of educating students on military land (public schools on military bases) results in uncontrollable utility costs with rates that are significantly higher than those schools that operate off of a military base. Also, military bases most often bring in an influx of students from various cultures and languages. The addition of these ELL students, and the transiency of military connected students, adds to the need for additional services from the local school district. This increase in utility costs and costs associated with servicing ELL students are not offset by the remaining 10 percent of the Federal Impact Aid that an affected district is allowed to use.

The State is not required by the Impact Aid laws to take into account Impact Aid in determining state aid for education. The federal law only allows a limited exception for a State to take into consideration Impact Aid in determining State Aid if it passes an equalization test (or disparity test). The State should not exercise this limited exception and, instead, should allow affected districts to receive the Impact Aid for which they qualify. In a similar manner, even though organized areas (city and borough school districts with a municipal tax base) are technically allowed to maintain up to 90 percent of their Federal Impact Aid, they are then penalized by the required local contribution as a substitute for part of the foundation funds allocated to each district. *Adopted 2014 (Sunset Nov. 2019)*

#### **2.43 FUNDING FOR INTERNET SERVICES**

AASB urges the Alaska Legislature to provide full funding for Internet services for rural schools provided for in HB 278 and to extend those benefits to urban school districts as well. Digital literacy is a fundamental skill in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; equitable Internet access will allow all students to develop this skill.

**Rationale.** The lack of broadband Internet for rural schools continues to exacerbate program inequities for rural schools. AASB thanks the Legislature for including a provision in HB 278 for rural school districts to receive speeds up to 10 megabits. The Legislature did not provide the funding that would allow all eligible schools to have 10 megabits and did not include urban schools as eligible for the state-provided Internet

benefits. HB 179 and SB 82, as proposed, would have also benefited urban districts. The Legislature should include the provisions for urban districts and fully fund the program. *Adopted 2014 (Sunset Nov. 2019)*

#### **2.44 FUNDING FOR STUDENTS WHO RETURN TO SCHOOL TO GET A DIPLOMA**

AASB urges the Alaska Legislature to provide funding to school districts through the foundation formula for “overage” students to return to school to get credits to earn their diploma. Students who did not finish their course work because they lost hope of a diploma because they failed the HSGQE should have an opportunity to complete their high school courses and receive their diploma. Funding should include students who are 21 years old and who want to return to school for one year.

**Rationale.** Students without a diploma are denied access to post secondary and employment opportunities including the military. Some students who did not pass the HSGQE lost hope of ever earning a diploma so dropped out of school. Now that students can receive a diploma without passing the HSGQE, district should recruit these students to return to school to earn credits to receive a diploma. Some of the students in this situation will be too old to receive funding through the foundation formula’s current rules. *Adopted 2014, Amended 2015 (Sunset Nov. 2019)*

#### **2.45 COST OF IMPLEMENTING ALASKA STATE STANDARDS**

AASB urges the State of Alaska to assume the costs of implementing the Alaska state standards.

**Rationale.** In 2012 DEED developed and promulgated extensive plans for the various districts to develop and implement the new 21st century plans for teaching and evaluating learning from K to 12. As the districts evaluate these programs they find that the costs for implementation are staggering in terms of acquiring new curriculum, implementing continuing education for teachers and administrators, and making digital media and associated technology and teaching software equitably accessible. Basically the initiative mandates cost to the districts in terms of time and money but offers no financial support or personnel to facilitate the process.

For smaller districts this can result in hundreds of thousands of dollars; for larger districts millions. Other than some slim reserves in a few districts, financing and staffing will have to come from reduction in operating expenses and/or reduction in staff. In the attempt to improve educational outcome we will ironically being forced to abandon or weaken the forces and personnel necessary to carry out the plan. It is akin to mixing concrete without limestone.

Each budget cycle the various districts should convene a committee consisting of the superintendent, the business manager and a knowledgeable member of the public with skills in accountancy to tease out that portion of each budget item is attributable to meeting new standards and which to normal operation. The distribution of those sums and their cumulative expense can then be reported to the funding authority. It is suggested that the responsibility for funding the item be split 90:10 between the State of Alaska and the local district. *Adopted 2014, Amended 2015 (Sunset Nov. 2019)*

#### **2.46 URGING THE STATE OF ALASKA TO MAINTAIN THE 10 STUDENT MINIMUM ADM FOR SCHOOL FUNDING**

AASB urges the Alaska Legislature to maintain the present minimum student count of ten (10) students as the minimum school size and base level of funding for a school building in the Public School Funding Program formula.



**Rationale:** Schools are the center of communities or neighborhoods. They provide a fundamental service to the public in the area that they serve. School boards and community members value their local schools and the educational opportunities provided to their children and youth. Small schools help to maintain the local cultural identities and historical perspectives of each community within the state of Alaska.

During the 2014-2015 school year, there were 65 schools identified with student counts between 10 and 24 students. If the minimum count were raised to 25, all of these schools would not be funded at the minimum level.

Under Article VII, Section 1 of the Alaska Constitution, the state has a duty to establish and maintain a system of public schools open to all children in the state. A legal opinion for the Citizens for the Educational Advancement of Alaska's Children notes that closing small schools would result in disparate treatment of children in two ways: "First, the overall amount of funding available and the educational resources available to provide these children with an adequate education will be reduced. Second, there will be dramatic disparities in the educational opportunities available to these students who will be deprived of the educational resources of the school environment, classroom supports, and a classroom teacher. The evidence-based scientific research supports the need for students to be educated with their peers in a classroom with a qualified teacher. The State will be unable to point to any scientific, research-based alternative as a substitute for educating children in a school with a qualified teacher and administrative support. Without such an alternative, the proposed legislation will violate the State Constitution." *Adopted 2015*

#### **2.47 URGING THE LEGISLATURE TO ADDRESS INEQUITIES IN SCHOOL FUNDING**

AASB urges the Alaska Legislature to address inequities in school funding identified in a July 2015 report to the Legislative Budget & Audit Committee.

**Rationale.** A report for K-12 funding by Augenblick, Palaich & Associates, entitled "Review of Alaska's School Funding Program," recommends that the K-12 foundation formula program (AS 14) provide more opportunities for limited-income children and English language learners to ensure their academic progress. The consequences of an ever-growing gap between rich and poor can be improved with higher educational outcomes. More support to address achievement for Alaska Native students is critical to overcoming the challenges of the effects of oppression and restoring knowledge and culture of the first people of Alaska. *Adopted 2015*

#### **2.48 RESOURCES TO EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENT THE ALASKA SAFE CHILDREN'S ACT**

AASB urges the Legislature to provide resources to effectively implement the mandates of the Alaska Safe Children's Act (AS 14.30).

**Rationale.** School Board members recognize the importance of training to staff in protecting children and in educating children on healthy relationships and preventing child sexual abuse. With the passage of the Alaska Safe Children's Act many unfunded mandates were legislated. Just the mandated training for all certificated and classified staff in "restraint and seclusion" will take two days per staff. The cost will be thousands of dollars and a loss of academic instructional time with their students. A plan to examine all the costs of unfunded mandates and provide resources and time to make up for loss of instruction for children's learning is needed. *Adopted 2015*

#### **2.49 LOCAL CONTROL OF SCHOOL FUNDING**

AASB urges the Legislature to amend AS 14.03.260 (a) to specify that state pass-through mandates for funding of charter schools do not apply to municipal funding for education so that the required local contribution may be allocated by school boards as they see

best in their districts.

**Rationale.** Each school district is unique in student enrollment, choices available to students in program and course offerings, and in operational costs. Locally elected school boards are best equipped to decide revenue allocations for their districts. *Adopted 2015*

### **2.50 INCREASING THE FUND BALANCE CAP FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS**

AASB urges the Legislature to amend AS 14.17.505 (a) to increase to 15 percent or higher the cap on fund balances.

**Rationale.** The 10 percent cap on carryover budget balances has restricted school districts since 1998. Extra funds in excess of the 10 percent cap that are gained from realized efficiencies and effective budget management must be transferred back to the state. This can discourage conservative spending. In addition, school funding fluctuates unexpectedly with student count and government funding, creating potential cash flow problems. *Adopted 2015*

## **CHILD ADVOCACY**

### **3.1 DECLARING CHILDREN OF ALASKA OUR MOST VALUABLE RESOURCE AND THEIR HEALTH, SAFETY, WELFARE, AND EDUCATION IS OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE**

AASB understands that the children are our most valuable resource and encourages the Alaska Legislature and the Governor to declare that our children are our most valuable resource and to further declare that their health, safety, welfare, and highest standard of education is of paramount importance.

**Rationale.** A declaration of this kind by the state would lend support to prevention and protective services, for all education needs and for a long-range fiscal plan for state government services. *Adopted 2004, Amended 2011 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

### **3.2 PROMOTING STUDENT SUCCESS THROUGH SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT**

AASB encourages each neighborhood, faith community, civic organization, community, school district, tribal entity and state agency to review the research in order to advocate, create and sustain programs of social and emotional learning and other initiatives that build assets in Alaska's children and teens, provide positive adult role models and support, and incorporate culturally responsive awareness.

**Rationale.** Research shows that effective schools, families, faith communities, and all adults in our communities can contribute to the positive development of youth. The difference between troubled teens and those leading healthy, productive, and positive lives, is strongly affected by the presence of what is labeled "developmental assets®." These assets are additive, meaning that the more a young person has, the better. Forty of these assets were identified – 20 exist in the student's environment and 20 belong in the head and heart of every child. These developmental assets serve as building blocks for human development in a young person's life and are developed through positive relationships with adults.

Research shows that the more assets students have the less likely they are to use drugs and alcohol, the less likely they are to be sexually active, to be depressed or have suicidal thoughts, to fail in school, and to exhibit antisocial or violent behavior. The more

assets children have the more likely they are to succeed in school, to be involved in their community and to exhibit empathic and caring behaviors.

Research also shows that promoting social and emotional learning leads to reduced violence and aggression among children, higher academic achievement and an improved ability to function both in school and in the workplace. Schools that create socially and emotionally sound learning and working environments and that help students and staff develop greater social and emotional competence, in turn help ensure positive short- and long-term academic and personal outcomes for students and higher levels of teaching and work satisfaction for staff. *Amended 1998, 2002, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

### **3.3 FETAL ALCOHOL AND DRUG EXPOSED STUDENTS**

AASB recognizes the impact of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and urges efforts to raise awareness of the need for prevention and appropriate intervention. AASB requests that the Alaska Legislature provide and improve effective programs and services aimed at the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of children with FASD within our state, and to allocate adequate funding to the appropriate agencies necessary to provide parent and guardian training, school staff training, paraprofessional and specialized educational services, including transportation, necessary to serve children with FASD and/or who have suffered from prenatal exposure to illicit drugs. Further, AASB urges all Alaska post-secondary institutions to include FASD intervention education in their teacher preparation and paraprofessional programs.

**Rationale.** Prevention is the best long-term approach. The public must be educated that the use of alcohol/drugs during pregnancy may severely affect and damage children. The child who has been prenatally exposed to drugs and/or alcohol is at risk for developmental, behavioral, psychosocial and learning problems. Alaska's public schools must provide educational services to all children regardless of developmental impairment. Although Alaska has one of the highest incidence rates of children born with FASD, not all communities have the ability to diagnosis this disease. Not all children with FASD meet the criteria for Special Ed Programs. It is estimated that for every child born with true fetal alcohol syndrome, 10 are born with developmental delay in the context of prenatal alcohol exposure and are difficult to identify.

Children with FASD often require special instructional strategies and materials. The educational identification and service of children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder is extremely expensive. Funding support for education of children with disabilities is already barely sufficient to meet the needs of those children currently identified. *Amended 1998, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2009, 2010, 2011 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

### **3.4 PREVENTING ACCESS TO PORNOGRAPHY ON THE INTERNET**

AASB supports efforts to prevent children's access to pornography on the Internet and encourages efforts to create a more positive, safe interactive electronic communications for children. AASB supports efforts to provide parents with the necessary information about the influence of the Internet in order to assist them in their decisions concerning all Internet access for their child. AASB also supports self-regulation in the industry encouraging providers of pornography to post rating labels and "black-out" pages requiring adult verification before access is granted.

**Rationale.** Pornography is highly prevalent on the Internet. The Internet allows access to material all over the world with very little regulation. Innocent searches for class or personal information can occasionally lead into pornography. With rating systems in place that would post a rating scale upon a search using an Internet search engine and

voluntary “black-out” with adult verification, children’s access to inappropriate material will be limited. *Adopted 1997, 2002, Amended 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

### **3.5 VIOLENCE IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA AND ENTERTAINMENT**

AASB supports efforts encouraging and challenging the media, entertainment and advertising industries to develop more positive content for both children and adults that demonstrate nonviolent solutions to problems and respect for human life. AASB supports efforts to provide parents with the necessary information about the influence of media in order to assist them in their decisions concerning all of its influences upon their children. AASB also supports self-regulation within the industry by asking them to post rating labels on all videos and video games rented or sold by video merchants or loaned by public libraries, and prohibiting children under age of 17 from renting R-or X-rated videos, M-rated video games or attending R-or X-rated movies without parental permission.

**Rationale.** It is estimated that children who regularly watch television are exposed through news and entertainment programming to tens of thousands of violent assaults and deaths by the time they reach adulthood.

Analysis of multiple victim school shootings (Anchorage Daily News, June 21, 1998) indicates a commonality of these four factors: obsession with violent pop culture, a child who felt inferior or picked on (probably suicidal), easy access to guns, and ample warning signs. Reducing the violence will not eliminate the threat, but will work in conjunction with efforts directed at addressing the other three factors. *Amended 1998, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2007 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

### **3.6 INHALANT, ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, E-CIGARETTES, METHAMPHETAMINES, MARIJUANA, DESIGNER DRUGS AND ANY ILLICIT SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

AASB calls upon the Legislature of the State of Alaska to support local communities in their strength-based education, prevention and treatment efforts to combat inhalant, alcohol, tobacco, e-cigarettes, methamphetamines, marijuana, designer drugs and other illicit substances and to provide effective law enforcement to ensure laws pertaining to controlled substances are enforced. AASB also requests the State of Alaska make adequate funds available for community-based and residential efforts to address effective substance use and abuse treatment programs for children, young people and their families.

Additionally, AASB supports regulations or modifications to the marijuana statute to counter potential negative impacts on Alaska youth, i.e. restricted marketing, prohibition of lookalike products that appeal to youth regardless of packaging, denial of youth access to business where marijuana and its derivatives are sold or used, clear and simple process for a community to be “dry”, and an appropriate allocation of the tax revenue from marijuana sales, production and businesses to support drug use and abuse education prevention (including after-school and school drop out programs) and treatment.

**Rationale:** Drug-related problems, including inhalant, alcohol, tobacco, methamphetamines and other drug abuse, are a major debilitating influence on the lives of the youth of Alaska. They have been proven to be the primary contributing factor in the alarming number of dropouts and youth suicides in the State of Alaska. Community-based prevention and intervention efforts are proving effective in combating drug-related problems. The treatment of children and young people is very different from the treatment of adults for substance abuse. Communities need adequate funds for effective substance abuse prevention and treatment programs. *Amended 1998, 1999, 2001, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2013, 2014 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

### **3.7 INTERAGENCY COOPERATION AMONG SERVICE PROVIDERS SERVING CHILDREN**

AASB supports interagency information sharing within Federal Rights to Privacy requirements (FERPA, HIPAA, 42CFR) to ensure that children are able to come to school each day ready to learn, and to enable agencies to develop a cooperative treatment plan that involves appropriate school personnel.

**Rationale.** Children who receive services from social service agencies are already experiencing disruption in their lives. This disruption frequently makes it difficult for them to concentrate on their schoolwork. These students need to have educational skills to succeed in the world. Yet decisions are frequently made about the life of these children that do not take into account their educational needs.

When children are receiving services from multiple agencies, one agency will frequently have information that may be crucial to the service delivery of another agency and/or the child is receiving duplicating and sometime conflicting services from more than one agency. Addressing the needs of the whole child requires an improved delivery system, which is comprehensive, collaborative, child and family centered, and focused on prevention. *Amended 2001, 2002, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2011 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

### **3.8 SUICIDE PREVENTION, EDUCATION AND TREATMENT EFFORTS**

AASB requests the Legislature to provide funding for statewide suicide prevention efforts coordinated among the peer helper programs, mental health centers, and village based suicide prevention efforts. Prevention efforts should include a statewide program to bring professional mental health counselors on-site to visit schools or support school-based counseling programs. Further, we urge school districts, tribal entities, appropriate agencies and communities to actively engage in responding to this serious, ongoing challenge.

**Rationale.** The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports that suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people 15 -19 years of age, (following unintentional injuries). The rate of teenage suicide in Alaska is much greater than the national average.

Suicide is often precipitated by depression, substance abuse, harassment and intimidation and separation from a significant other. Coordinated efforts among all agencies will be better able to present programs, which address mental health, coping skills in response to stress, substance abuse, employment, and healthy relationships.

Currently, many Alaskan communities participate in the Community-Based Suicide Prevention Program which allows each community to determine and implement the kind of project it believes is most likely to reduce self-destructive behavior. *Amended 1998, 1999, 2002, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2010, 2015 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

### **3.9 SAFE, CARING AND CONNECTED SCHOOLS**

AASB recognizes the importance of positive school climate and student connectedness to school as powerful influences on student academic success and on reducing youth risk behaviors and urges the Legislature and state agencies to join AASB in supporting school district efforts to improve school climate and increase student connectedness to school. AASB supports efforts to provide a school environment that is free from weapons, harassment and intimidation, violence, drugs (including alcohol and tobacco), and other factors that threaten the safety of students and staff.

**Rationale.** It is common sense that when students feel safe and welcome in school where their identity is honored and are encouraged to learn, their attendance increases as well as their academic achievement. Research shows the clear association of school climate and student connectedness with positive academic outcomes and with reduced risk behavior and increased safety. AASB's School Climate and Connectedness Survey has provided a tool for districts to measure climate and connectedness factors. The survey also has provided Alaska data that aligns with national research. *Amended 1998, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2008, 2009, 2014, 2015 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

### **3.10 SUPPORT OF STATE FUNDING FOR STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES IN ALASKA**

AASB strongly urges the Administration and the Legislature to provide funding for school-based student health services.

**Rationale.** School nurses and other student health services are vitally important supports for student well-being and academic success. *Amended 2002, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2011 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

### **3.11 HIV/AIDS AND OTHER STD EDUCATION**

AASB supports providing effective HIV/AIDS and other STD education programs for students and parents, and training for certified and classified school staff. AASB supports an effective and comprehensive education effort that focuses on reducing risk by emphasizing abstinence, healthy decision making and refusal skills. Such instruction may also include the use of barrier methods. An effective way to do this is to bring together a broad consensus of the community in order to develop and implement the district's HIV/AIDS curriculum on preventing HIV/AIDS and other STD.

**Rationale.** The impact of all STD's can be devastating. For instance, the dormancy of the HIV virus can be as long as 10 years and the statistics indicate that many young people are contracting the virus while in their teens. Health education should emphasize the consequences of contracting STDs, many of which are life-long. The instructions should not lull teens into careless and risky behavior. *Amended 1998, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2008, 2009 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

### **3.12 EDUCATION OF STUDENTS IN RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIORS RELATING TO HUMAN SEXUALITY**

AASB encourages responsible behaviors relating to human sexuality by supporting programs that promote abstinence, develop healthy decision-making skills, teach refusal skills and promote prevention of pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

**Rationale.** The Youth Risk Behavior Study of 2011 indicates a decrease in the number of students who reported that they had sexual intercourse at least once. In 2011, about 38 percent of high school students reported having had sexual intercourse, compared to 43 percent in 2009.

Research presented by the Search Institute and their "Building Assets in Youth" model has determined that a teen's belief "in the importance of abstaining from sexual activity and his/her willingness to postpone sexual activity" is significant to their personal and academic development. *Amended 1998, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2007, 2008 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

### **3.13 IN SUPPORT OF THE ALASKA CHILDREN'S TRUST**

AASB fully supports the work of the Alaska Children's Trust and urges all member school boards to promote the Trust and its efforts to address the tragic consequences of abuse,

neglect, violence, and crime experienced by too many of Alaska's children. AASB urges the Legislature to support and increase the Children's Trust Endowment.

**Rationale.** The Alaska Children's Trust was established by the Legislature in 1988 with the mandate to promote initiatives that strengthen families and serve dependent children. The Trust has since been transferred to a private, non-profit organization, and the Alaska Community Foundation manages its funds.

The goal of the Children's Trust is to promote and provide opportunities so that Alaska's children can grow to responsible and productive adulthood. The Children's Trust will fund local programs that meet the needs and challenges of Alaska's families and children with innovative, efficient and effective services. *Amended 1997, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2015 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

### **3.14 INCREASED SUPPORT OF ALASKA HEAD START PROGRAMS**

Alaska Head Start programs and services are a partnership between federal, state and community-level entities. The Association of Alaska School Boards supports and urges the Congress of the United States, the President, the Alaska Legislature, and the Governor to provide sufficient and consistent funding to make Head Start, Early Infant Learning available to all eligible young Alaskans, regardless of the number of children in the program.

**Rationale.** Project Head Start has had a beneficial impact on the academic, physical, social, and emotional development of impoverished pre-school students and their families throughout Alaska and the United States since its inception in the 1960's.

Children at-risk who have benefited from a quality early childhood program spend 1.3 years less in some form of special education placement. They have been shown to score higher on such school readiness measures as verbal achievement, perceptual reasoning and social competence than other low-income children attending either another preschool or no preschool.

Head Start has immediate positive effects on children's socio-emotional development, including self-esteem, achievement, motivation and social behavior. Parents involved in Head Start have been shown to participate more in activities, including transition, than non-Head Start parents.

Within Alaska, 16 Head Start grantee agencies serve approximately 3,000 children and their families in 100 communities. A large number of eligible Alaskan children (estimated to be nearly 76%) remain unserved, due to lack of sufficient funding. *Amended 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2006, 2009, 2010 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

### **3.15 SUPPORTING THE SAFE AND DRUG-FREE SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES ACT**

AASB urges the U.S. Congress to continue funding for the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act at levels adequate to support effective education, counseling and prevention efforts. The Association recommends that such valuable new initiatives as preventing violence in the schools be funded through separate appropriation.

**Rationale.** The Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act authorized federal appropriations to state and local education agencies to devise programming to provide drug use education, counseling, and abuse prevention services for America's young people. Programs funded through the Act are currently providing valuable services and will be needed for the foreseeable future.

Although violence in the schools is a serious issue and developing programs to combat it is an appropriate federal responsibility, any diversion of resources from the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act would cripple important drug education, counseling and abuse prevention programs that are only taking root and becoming effective. *Amended 1998, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2008, 2009 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

### **3.16 REVISE PARENTAL PERMISSION REQUIREMENTS FOR QUESTIONNAIRES AND SURVEYS ADMINISTERED IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

AASB supports modifying the requirements for parental or legal guardian permission for a student to participate in a questionnaire or survey administered in a public school to make it easier for school districts to obtain the necessary permission.

**Rationale.** The passage of HB 44 in 2015 included an amendment requiring affirmative parental permission for most any questionnaire or survey of students by school districts. This prohibition makes it very difficult for school administrators to gather information crucial to identifying and addressing problems affecting students, from drug and alcohol use to bullying and other intimidation. *Adopted 2001, Amended 2007, 2009, 2015 (Sunset Nov. 2016)*

### **3.17 STUDENT WELLNESS**

Good physical and mental health of children is essential if they are to take full advantage of the educational services offered by their school. AASB urges students, parents, educators, guardians, community groups, tribal entities and state and local agencies to collaborate on collective ways to ensure all children are prepared to learn through healthy eating habits, physical activity, social emotional learning awareness and access to adequate housing and health care. Due to the federally mandated Child Nutrition Act, funding to school districts should be increased to support adequate school services and programs to address those mandates. Specific school-based measures to reduce child weight and obesity issues and should include increased funding for school districts.

**Rationale.** AASB recognizes child wellness is also determined by circumstances outside the school, from the availability of good nutrition and physical activity to the ability of each family to provide housing and health care for their members. Obesity is a growing health threat to all generations of Alaskans; it increases the risks of chronic diseases and conditions such as heart disease, liver failure, diabetes, stroke, hypertension, some cancers and premature death. Therefore, community-based collaboration is essential for long-term success. *Adopted 2005, Amended 2006, 2008, 2009, 2015 (Sunset Nov. 2020)*

### **3.18 PROMOTING AWARENESS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD BRAIN DEVELOPMENT**

AASB encourages legislative recognition that brain development in 0-3 year-old children critically impacts educational success. Inadequate brain development in the very early years is impossible to overcome and poses a huge and costly challenge for school districts. AASB supports efforts to inform parents and families about promoting healthy brain development in their very young children and to provide related resources that support early brain development efforts. AASB further urges legislators to fund early learning programs.

**Rationale.** Success in education is largely dependent on the degree of brain development achieved from birth to age 3. Age appropriate, culturally relevant and native language supported resources need to be made available for families to stimulate proper brain development in order to increase children's learning potential. Various public and private agencies, including school districts, should encourage collaborative efforts to provide information and effective, research-based resources to parents and guardians of



very young children. The benefits of wise investment in young children will be substantial, and the consequences of poor investments costly. *Adopted 2005, Amended 2011, 2013, 2015 (Sunset Nov. 2020)*

### **3.19 SCHOOL ACTIVITY AND STATEWIDE TESTING SCHEDULES IN RELATION TO MAJOR RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES**

In advocating for the respect of cultural differences and in recognition of increasing diversity, AASB encourages the State of Alaska, school districts and the Alaska School Activities Association to schedule major school-sanctioned activities and statewide testing on days that do not conflict with major religious holidays and cultural activities.

**Rationale.** As of this time, Christmas and Easter do not have major sporting events or other activities for students scheduled for these holidays. In its advocacy role, AASB can influence ASAA, individual school boards and the Department of Education & Early Development to refrain from scheduling student activities, sporting events and statewide testing the Jewish High Holy Days (Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah), holidays associated with Islam (Eid, the end of Ramadan), Russian Orthodox Christmas and Easter and other major holidays of our communities' faith organizations. *Adopted 2007 Amended 2009, 2011 (Sunset Nov. 2017)*

### **3.20 INTERVENTIONS AND SANCTIONS THAT REDUCE LOSS OF CREDIT**

AASB supports amending AS 14.30.171 to allow school district personnel to reduce or mitigate suspensions or expulsions based on attendance and participation in appropriate interventions.

**Rationale.** SB 48, an act relating to recommending or refusing psychotropic drugs or certain types of evaluations or treatments for children, was adopted by the legislature in 2006. It does not currently allow school district administration to reduce the number of days for suspensions or expulsions, if there is a program or evaluation in place. The loss of credit and loss of intervention programs negatively impact communities. *Adopted 2007 (Sunset Nov. 2017)*

### **3.21 SUPPORTING LEGISLATION RESTORING THE DENALI KIDCARE PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY STANDARD TO 200 PERCENT OF FEDERAL POVERTY GUIDELINES**

AASB strongly urges the Legislature to reintroduce and pass a bill expanding the eligibility standard for enrollment in the Denali KidCare Program from the present level to 200 percent of the federal poverty level with no cuts to currently covered services. AASB also strongly urges the governor to sign the legislation into law.

**Rationale.** SB 13, passed during the 26<sup>th</sup> Alaska Legislature, would have made health insurance available to an estimated 1,300 additional uninsured children in Alaska. SB 13 passed by substantial majorities in both chambers but was vetoed by the governor. By ensuring medical coverage for an increased number of economically disadvantaged children, the state will help ensure that they are ready to learn and not distracted and/or impaired by physical or emotional health problems.

Denali KidCare serves an estimated 7,900 children and remains one of the least costly medical assistance programs in the state, at about \$1,700 per child with full coverage, including dental. Alaska is one of only five states that fund its State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. A total of 19 states cover families with incomes between 250 and 300 percent of federal poverty level. *Adopted 2010, Amended 2011 (Sunset Nov. 2020)*

### **3.22 STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN INTERSCHOLASTIC ACTIVITIES**

AASB urges the Alaska School Activities Association, the Department of Education & Early Development and the Alaska Legislature to provide clear rules and appropriate funding to assure that all students participating in interscholastic activities adhere to the standards set forth by the state and local school districts.

**Rationale.** AASB believes it is in the interest of all students to adhere to consistent rules regarding transfers, academic requirements for participation, state testing, accreditation, and funding mechanisms. *Adopted 2012 Amended 2014 (Sunset Nov. 2017)*

### **3.23 SUPPORT OF FULL STATE FUNDING FOR PUBLIC HEALTH REQUIREMENTS**

AASB strongly urges the Administration and the Legislature to continue to sufficiently fund the Public Health Nurse Program, community health aides/practitioners and other immunization programs so that necessary and required immunizations and health screenings can be provided free of charge for all disadvantaged children and youth.

**Rationale.** Children are not allowed to attend school without all mandatory immunizations. Charging for these immunizations can create an insurmountable barrier for disadvantaged youth and children, as well as creating an increased severity of social and health problems caused by the rise of preventable infections and missed education opportunities due to missed immunizations. In addition, early health screenings performed by public health nurses identify health, developmental and/or other factors that may interfere with a child's learning, growth and development.

"Public Health Nurses serve populations that are marginalized by society and address differences in health status that are unnecessary, avoidable, and unjust." – Association of State and Territorial Directors of Nursing, "Report on a Public Health Nurse to Population Ratio" October 2008

"As science and medicine continue to evolve, so does our ability -- and public health responsibility -- to prevent disease. The results of some of these advancements are new vaccines. The current U.S. vaccination schedule for children between birth and six years old recommends immunizations for at least 15 different diseases that may cause significant health problems and even death. Although this number may seem like a lot, it's important to know each and every disease has the potential to quickly reappear if vaccination rates drop." – New York Department of Health website  
[www.health.ny.gov/prevention](http://www.health.ny.gov/prevention) *Adopted 2012, Amended 2013 (Sunset Nov. 2017)*

### **3.24 TOBACCO FREE SCHOOLS**

AASB supports and advocates for a comprehensive tobacco-free school policy in all districts around the state that promotes general health and welfare for students and all individuals in the school environment. This includes all school properties and contractors in the schools, which protects future generations from tobacco use and exposure and reinforces tobacco-free norms and attitudes.

**Rationale.** The 2015 Youth Risk Behavior Study data showed the following about tobacco and nicotine products:

- 11 percent of Alaska high school students are current smokers (smoked at least once in the past 30 days);
- 21 percent of high school students say they currently use either combustible tobacco products, including cigarettes and cigars, or smokeless tobacco;

- About 18 percent of teens report current use of e-cigarettes.

Schools are often a vital and central gathering place for the entire community, hosting sporting events, dances, funerals, potlucks, health fairs, concerts, community lunches, etc. The image of older youth and adults using tobacco influences younger children to try and start using, or older youth can serve as positive role models. Communication is necessary to enforce a comprehensive tobacco-free policy.

Tobacco use is an addictive disease and not merely a discipline matter. Teens should be provided options for treatment; and yet a 2012 survey by the State of Alaska found only a dozen Alaska school districts with progressive consequences regarding tobacco violations. A comprehensive tobacco free policy (see AASB BP 3513.3 and 5131.62) includes all students, staff, visitors and the general public. *Adopted 2012 Amended 2013, 2015 (Sunset Nov. 2017)*

### **3.25 SUPPORTING SEX ABUSE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION EDUCATION**

AASB supports the expansion and funding of age-appropriate sexual abuse and assault awareness and prevention education in grades K through 12. Passage of the Alaska Safe Children's Act of 2015 offers momentum towards this goal. The law requires schools to offer education to make children and youth aware of sexual abuse and assault, as well as dating violence and healthy relationships.

**Rationale.** Child abuse in Alaska is a chronic problem that spans generations. In 2013, the Office of Children's Services received nearly 2,300 allegations of child sexual abuse involving more than 1,800 unique victims. More than 800 of these cases resulted in criminal charges. While the Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault offers programs that provide outreach and education presentations in schools, upon request, resources are not sufficient to address the problem. If granted support for curriculum development and materials, schools could supplement the awareness and prevention effort. *Adopted 2014, Amended 2015 (Sunset Nov. 2019)*

## **PERSONNEL**

### **4.1 SUPPORTS FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

AASB supports funded opportunities and sufficient resources for quality and relevant staff preparation and demonstrably effective continuing development in both urban and rural settings for those educating Alaska's public school students. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Professional development for teachers to effectively implement the newly mandated Alaska State Standards;
- Pre-service: State training programs through postsecondary and other institutions (e.g. RANA—Rural Alaska Native Adult education program out of Alaska Pacific University and REPP—Rural Education Preparation Program out of University of Alaska Fairbanks);
- Expanding Department of Education & Early Development packaged training programs for all school districts to use in providing consistent mandated training to employees and in meeting the requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act;

- Developing resources to allow the sharing and implementation of best educational practices;
- Quality in-service programs at the local district level;
- Necessary training for paraprofessionals and special needs educators.

**Rationale.** The greatest factor affecting the ability of the state's students to master Alaska's student performance standards is the quality of the teacher who delivers instruction to the student. Compounding this critical concern is the shortage of qualified teachers, administrators and paraprofessionals. Issues such as teacher, administrator and paraprofessional recruitment, distribution, preparation, and in-service continue to impact the supply and retention of qualified staff. In addition, teachers who work with indigenous students too often lack knowledge about the nuances of living in Alaska, particularly rural Alaska. While the state has recently increased efforts to attract teachers and staff from both conventional and non-traditional sources and to more effectively prepare teachers, the promise of these efforts has yet to reach most school districts. *Adopted 2002, Amended 2004, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2015 (Sunset Nov. 2017)*

#### **4.2 NATIONAL CERTIFICATION OF TEACHERS**

AASB supports efforts to establish a financial incentive mechanism for state support of teachers and districts wishing to participate in the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) process. State support for this resolution should be outside the foundation formula. Additional incentives to attract NBPTS teachers to under-performing schools should be considered.

**Rationale.** NBPTS is an organization of teachers, administrators, board members, and other education stakeholders working to advance the teaching profession and to improve student learning. The mission of the NBPTS is to establish high and rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do. Linked to these standards will be a new generation of fair and trustworthy assessment processes that honor the complexities and demands of teaching. The NBPTS certification process is offered on a voluntary basis for teachers wishing to demonstrate exemplary performance around the five core propositions:

- Teachers are committed to students and their learning.
- Teachers know the subjects they teach, and how to teach those subjects to students.
- Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring students learning.
- Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.
- Teachers are members of learning communities.

These standards are well aligned with the Alaska State Board of Education adopted teaching standards. *Adopted 1998, Amended 2007 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

#### **4.3 ALASKA STATEWIDE EDUCATOR MENTORING**

AASB applauds the willingness of veteran educators to serve as mentors to Alaska's teachers and administrators. AASB urges the Alaska Legislature to provide adequate and permanent funding to continue professional staff mentoring.

**Rationale.** Surveys have shown that far too many teachers and principals leave the profession within their first five years out of frustration or lack of success. Mentors who serve to provide advice and support during these critical early years are a proven remedy to this dropout phenomenon. Alaska should invest money in mentoring programs to

ensure that they exist into the future, when federal funds may not be available. *Adopted 2005, Amended 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2015 (Sunset Nov. 2020)*

#### **4.4 SPECIAL EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES TRAINING**

The Association of Alaska School Boards promotes the establishment and expansion of postsecondary educational programs to train additional individuals as certified special education teachers and the initiation of programs to train related services providers (i.e. school psychologists, physical therapists, and speech therapists) within our state university system.

Academic programs to train some special education-related service providers are not currently available within Alaska. Therefore, AASB endorses providing financial support to Alaska residents who must attend professional certification programs outside the state. This support should be limited to those professionals committed to providing services to children in Alaska public schools. In addition, AASB supports the continuation of using alternative ways towards special education certification.

**Rationale.** The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 (IDEA-97) mandates appropriate educational services be provided to all certified special education students; the Assistance to States for the Education of Children with Disabilities (34 C.F.R. Part 300), Section 300.381 identifies the role of “the State (to) undertake (activities) to ensure an adequate supply of qualified personnel including special education and related services personnel...necessary to carry out the purposes of this part;” and, the Assistance to States for the Education of Children with Disabilities (34 C.F.R. Part 300), Section 300.382 identifies the role of “Each State plan (to) include a description of the procedures and activities the State will under take to ensure that all personnel necessary to carry out this part are appropriately and adequately trained...to include a system for continuing education of regular and special education and related service personnel to meet the needs of children with disabilities.”

School districts throughout the State of Alaska are having difficulty meeting the educational requirements of our special needs students due to a significant shortage of certified special education personnel. Furthermore, the University of Alaska has limited special education and related services professional preparation program opportunities available to individuals aspiring to become certified special education or related service professionals. *Adopted 1998, Amended 1999, 2000, 2010, 2011 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

#### **4.5 ADDRESSING THE TEACHER, SPECIALIST AND ADMINISTRATOR SHORTAGE**

The Association of Alaska School Boards urges the Alaska State Legislature, Alaska State Board of Education, and Teacher Education Programs in Alaska’s universities to address the severe shortage of teachers, specialists, and administrators in the State of Alaska. Suggested strategies may include:

- Incentives (salary bonuses, loan forgiveness, loan assumption, competitive retirement benefits, interest rate reduction, etc.);
- State supported marketing and licensure assistance to recruit teachers;
- Flexibility in certification requirements and reciprocity;
- Alternative routes to teacher certification;
- Improved access to bandwidth and technology teachers and staff, especially in rural communities;
- Increasing availability and/or quality of teacher housing;
- Mentoring programs for new teachers;
- Rehire of retired teachers and administrators;

- Professional support/development.
- Reducing redundant paperwork.
- Increasing awareness about the lives and communities of Alaska's children.

**Rationale.** It has been painfully demonstrated that a severe shortage of teachers, specialists, and administrators is being experienced in the school districts in every region of Alaska. Attracting and retaining quality teachers has become a critical issue facing school districts as they work to improve education in Alaska's public schools.

A teacher's job satisfaction is gauged by a number of factors, including a sense of accomplishment, professional support, decent living conditions, and adequate compensation/benefits. The degree to which Alaska meets these needs is a statement of the value we place on our educators. *Adopted 1999, Amended 2000, 2001, 2005, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2015 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

#### **4.6 REPEAL THE SOCIAL SECURITY GOVERNMENT PENSION OFFSET AND WINDFALL ELIMINATION PROVISION**

AASB supports the elimination of two little known amendments to the Social Security Act that unfairly penalize certain public employees by reducing earned retirement benefits. They are the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP).

**Rationale.** The Government Pension Offset and Windfall Elimination Provision unfairly reduce the Social Security rights of at least one-third of America's education workforce, including Alaskans enrolled in either the Teacher's Retirement System or the Public Employees Retirement System.

In 1977, Congress began treating government pensions, such as those earned by educators, as Social Security benefits. The Government Pension Offset (GPO) reduces an individual's Social Security survivor benefits (available to a person whose deceased spouse had earned Social Security benefits) by an amount equal to two-thirds of his/her public pension.

In 1983, Congress enacted the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP). It changes the formula used to figure benefit amounts – reducing an individual's own Social Security benefits (earned while working in a job covered by Social Security). For example, a teacher taught 17 years in one state, then moved to a different state and taught another 14 years. According to the Social Security Administration, she earned monthly benefits of \$540 per month for her contributions paid into the Social Security system while she worked in the first state. Because public employees in the second state do not participate in the Social Security system, her actual monthly benefits will be cut \$196 due to the (WEP). She will receive \$344 per month from Social Security instead of the \$540 she earned.

Congress further tightened the law in 2004 through passage of PL 108-203, which eliminated the "last day covered employment exemption" to the government offset provision. The law requires that the last 60 months of a person's government employment be covered by Social Security and the pension system in order to avoid reduction under the GPO.

The impact of the penalty is exacerbated with the change in TRS and PRS from defined benefit to defined contribution. *Adopted 2002, Amended 2007, 2013 (Sunset Nov. 2017)*

#### **4.7 RELATING TO DEFINED BENEFIT RETIREMENT**

AASB supports reestablishment of a fiscally responsible defined benefit retirement program. We believe this improves the hiring and retaining of highly qualified and effective staff.

**Rationale.** Secure retirement benefits are important for recruiting the best personnel to Alaska schools. Without competitive work benefits, it has become increasingly difficult to retain and recruit teachers, administrators and support staff. Districts are investing significant dollars to train staff to deliver world-class instruction and want to retain this knowledge in state to the advantage of our students. *Adopted 2005 Amended 2008, 2010, 2013 (Sunset Nov. 2020)*

#### **4.8 RELATING TO HEALTH CARE COSTS AND MEDICAL INSURANCE**

The effects of federal health care legislation on school districts are not yet fully understood. AASB calls upon the Governor, the Legislature and Congress to eliminate any unintended consequences harmful to school districts and to continue to look for ways to address the cost of health care in Alaska.

**Rationale.** In Alaska more than 110,000 residents have no medical insurance, and the price of treatment is increasing. In the U.S. 45.8 million people have no health insurance. The uninsured drive costs up for everyone. For school districts in Alaska these health care costs for current and retired employees is a growing problem. In many districts these costs add up to more than 10 percent of the budget. This growing budget category mitigates districts' ability to directly impact student achievement through classroom focused expenditures. *Adopted 2005, Amended 2010, 201, 2013 (Sunset Nov. 2020)*

#### **4.9 SUPPORTING USE OF LICENSED PROFESSIONALS TO FACILITATE SERVICES BY THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY**

AASB supports the use of technology by licensed professionals to facilitate the monthly supervision of paraprofessionals as they implement the related service goals in a student's individual education plan.

**Rationale.** In most of Alaska's smallest schools, very few students are enrolled in speech therapy, occupational therapy or physical therapy, and very few professionals are available to provide these services. The result is often the use of paraprofessional personnel to provide these services. One solution would be for a waiver of state laws to allow the supervision of these paraprofessionals by licensed professionals via virtual means. *Adopted 2005 Amended 2012 (Sunset Nov. 2020)*

#### **4.10 URGING THE STATE OF ALASKA TO REINSTATE THE RETIRE-REHIRE PROGRAM**

The State of Alaska and AASB recognize that there is a limited labor pool for some jobs in K-12 education and that AS 14.20.135 is a good tool to fill critical positions. AASB urges the Alaska Legislature to reinstate AS 14.20.135, Employment of Retired Teachers Because of Shortages.

**Rationale.** Passage of HB 161 in 2005 included a 2009 sunset date for employees working under a waiver through the retire-rehire program for positions that difficult to recruit. The law established rules regarding the recruitment process that must be used in hiring a retire-rehire employee; it requires employers to provide health insurance for the employees and to make contributions to the unfunded liability of the retirement system for the employees. After July 1, 2009, all employees hired under a waiver must cease employment with the State of Alaska or school districts, or they may continue working in their current jobs but cease collecting retirement benefits.

The retire-rehire program was initiated for good reasons, including the increasing difficulty in filling some highly specialized positions and the need for Alaska to offer competitive salaries and benefits for skilled workers. Those reasons continue to exist despite the arbitrary deadline established in the sunset clause. An irony of the law is that a skilled worker in another state can retire there and move to Alaska to accept a waiver position in public employment, but a skilled worker in Alaska cannot compete for the same job. *Adopted 2008, Amended 2009, 2013, 2014 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

#### **4.11 ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS TO CERTIFY HIGHLY QUALIFIED & EFFECTIVE TEACHERS**

AASB encourages the Department of Education & Early Development to develop alternative pathways for certifying teachers as highly qualified, with a particular focus on the need for teachers (a) to be highly qualified and effective in multiple subject areas (b) to qualify vocational/career technology teachers to provide core academic credit; and (c) to recognize an indigenous teacher certification track that will use Native/indigenous knowledge systems and pedagogy as a base for training teachers able to more effectively teach Native students. The alternative pathways should be created with participation from both urban and rural districts.

**Rationale:** The current highly qualified regulations established in the state accountability plan require a teacher to be highly qualified in each subject. In disciplines such as science and social studies, teachers maybe required to become highly qualified in Government and in History and in Social Studies. Science teachers must similarly be highly qualified in Chemistry and in Biology and in Physical Science and in Physics and in Geology. Rural school staffing patterns cannot support one teacher for each subject, let alone for each area within a discipline. In schools where one or two teachers must handle the entire secondary program, the additional preparation required to become highly qualified compounds teacher workloads, contributing to teacher burnout and turnover. This requirement can also severely limit student educational opportunities. Not only is there a severe shortage of Native teachers, there is also a dearth of culturally appropriate pathways to teacher certification. Research shows that Native teachers have a positive effect on and a better record of engaging Native students. The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development and Alaska colleges and universities should develop programs to support Native teachers to become certified. *Adopted 2008, Amended 2010, 2011, 2013 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

#### **4.12 TEACHER ENDORSEMENTS CHANGE NOTIFICATION**

AASB urges the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development to require adequate notice to school districts before teachers change their endorsements.

**Rationale.** Teachers assigned in April or May to teach a specific class, e.g. special education, in the fall may now drop that endorsement to their licenses before classes begin in August. Written notice to districts is required but may not be verified. The lack of adequate notice to school districts can leave schools and students without essential instructional resources. The restrictions of tenure add an additional consequence since a teacher may no longer be certified for an available position. *Adopted 2010, Amended 2011 (Sunset Nov. 2020)*

#### **4.13 TEACHER EVALUATIONS**

AASB urges the State Board of Education & Early Development to reconsider the weight ascribed to student growth measures in the educator evaluation system and the timeline for implementation. Specifically, the AASB encourages the Board to revise regulations pertaining to the local incorporation of student data so that districts have the authority to



decide, now and in the future, the appropriate weight ascribed to student learning data, at a figure no less than 20 percent, thereby giving districts greater flexibility in the implementation of the system. AASB also urges the Legislature to fund resources and training needed for districts to implement the new teacher evaluation system.

**Rationale.** The State Board of Education and Early Development adopted 4 AAC 04.200 in December 2012, creating a phased approach to the use of student growth measurements in teacher evaluations. The phasing will result in 50 percent of an educator's evaluation being based on student growth beginning in 2018-19. That standard is very ambitious and districts will need assistance in developing and implementing an evaluation plan that is equitable to staff and maintains accountability for teachers and other professional staff.

In 2014, the U.S. Department of Education announces that states could delay plans to factor student learning data into educator evaluations, acknowledging the enormous pressures mounting on teachers and school districts to implement standards, testing and evaluations on accelerated timelines, and the subsequent negative cumulative effect this can have on school climate. *Adopted 2013 Amended 2014 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

#### **4.14 SUPERINTENDENT EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

AASB urges the University of Alaska to strengthen its curriculum and program for the education of school superintendents in order to produce more applicants who are qualified in all aspects of district administration. The curriculum and training should include:

- Extensive focus on school finance, budget development and administration; school facilities planning, design, construction and financing;
- Curriculum and instruction;
- School law;
- School board relations and policy development;
- Strategies for improving student achievement;
- Public relations, including the judicious use of technology and social media;
- Human resources, including the recruitment, orientation, professional development and evaluation of school personnel;
- Labor relations, including collective bargaining and the administration of collective bargaining agreements.

**Rationale.** School districts are complex public institutions that require highly qualified leadership. There is a limited pool of these individuals that needs to be expanded. *Adopted 2013 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

#### **4.15 SUPERINTENDENT EDUCATION AND TRAINING - URGING THE STATE OF ALASKA TO CREATE ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS TO CERTIFICATION**

AASB recognizes that school districts are complex public institutions that require highly qualified leadership. There is a limited pool of these individuals that needs to be expanded, and alternative pathways to certification for the superintendency would strengthen district leadership by increasing the number and quality of superintendent candidates in pools for school boards and districts to consider.

**Rationale.** Combining the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years, almost half of the superintendents in Alaska are new superintendents within their current districts. A large majority of this group has not previously held a superintendent's position and a number of the vacancies that occurred received very limited applicant pools. By creating an alternative pathway, the State of Alaska can potentially encourage new candidates to

apply for these positions while at the same time leaving the local school boards as the ultimate hiring authority and final decision makers.

Alternatives do exist for certification in other elements of the education statutes for example a school psychologist without a Type A certificate successfully petitioned to amend the regulations to obtain a Type B certificate. There are already alternative pathways for teaching certification. Opening an alternative pathway for superintendents simply allows consideration of additional candidates by school boards; it does not mandate that a particular skill set be selected. *Adopted 2014 (Sunset Nov. 2019)*

#### **4.16 URGING THE STATE OF ALASKA TO REMOVE A SUBSTANTIAL ROADBLOCK TO HIRING TEMPORARY SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS**

AASB urges the Alaska Division of Retirement and Benefits to promulgate a rule, regulation, policy, directive or other binding determination to allow school districts to hire superintendents on a temporary basis without forfeiting their retirement status and without becoming active members of the Teachers Retirement System (TRS). AASB believes such relief to be in the best interest of the State of Alaska, individual school districts and parents, staff and students in affected districts.

**Rationale.** Current state law in Alaska Statute 14.25.220 (19) and (29) specifies that “temporary” superintendents are not eligible to be active members of TRS. Yet, there is no regulation, policy, directive or other binding determination by TRS as to the terms and duration of a “temporary” superintendent. AASB believes that an adequate definition of “temporary” would include the remainder of the school year in which the superintendent is hired and up to one full school year following.

The recruitment and selection of a superintendent by a school board is one of its most important duties and requires a thoughtful, deliberate, fair and public process. When an unanticipated vacancy occurs mid-year, the pool of potential replacements is often very limited. While school districts and the State of Alaska work on strategies to increase the pool of qualified superintendent candidates, the best immediate solution is to define the terms and duration of a temporary superintendent so that retired superintendents can re-enter the workforce to assist school districts when needed without being required to forfeit their retirement for the period of their new employment. *Adopted 2014 (Sunset Nov. 2019)*

## **EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

### **5.1 CAREER-EXPLORATION PROGRAMS**

The Association of Alaska School Boards strongly supports adequate and equitable funding for career and technical education, career technical student organizations, and, starting at the preschool and elementary level, career-exploration activities, while ensuring resources to satisfy needs and requirements of all academic programs.

**Rationale.** Both the U.S. Department of Education and the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development have endorsed and encouraged districts to implement career-exploration programs starting at the elementary level.

The implementation of career-exploration programs inevitably results in additional expenses that are not part of the standard budget schedules of school districts. Increased costs include, but are not limited to: purchase of equipment and materials related to occupations, transportation for students between schools and workplaces, training for staff members, release time for staff members, new staff positions career-exploration

coordinator, transition specialist, job coach), insurance and workman's compensation costs.

There are a large number of students in rural villages that do not complete high school or job training programs. There is a need to provide programs like the Rural Student Vocational Program (RSVP), which was eliminated in 1998, or innovative regional residency centers to enhance opportunities for these students. At the same time, career-exploration programs must integrate and ensure basic academic achievement. *Amended 1999, 2002, 2008, 2010, 2012 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

## **5.2 CURRICULUM EXPANSION VIA TECHNOLOGY**

AASB urges the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development (EED) and other entities to support, coordinate and encourage distance delivered education programs for students and teachers in partnership with local districts using existing facilities whenever possible, and supports funding for the purchase and installation of distance delivery education equipment and adequate bandwidth to support it. Other delivery methods must be made available until equitable connectivity is available statewide.

**Rationale.** All school districts need to have the capability to offer a variety of courses for all students, including the remedial student, vocational student, the student who left school without graduating, and the college bound student.

In order to take classes otherwise not available, students who attend small high schools must leave their community or take correspondence classes. There are examples in the state of success in delivering such courses utilizing technology. Many districts in the state are exploring the use of current technology in the form of distance delivery. Programs that are currently being offered in local districts could be utilized by other districts in state, or substituted for purchased programs now in use, with funding and support provided by EED.

Expanding distance delivery could also help meet the needs of "highly qualified" teachers and paraprofessionals under the 2001 amendments to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. *Amended 2001, 2002, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2014 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

## **5.3 NATIVE LANGUAGE PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT**

AASB supports state funding for staff training, program development and materials preparation to promote Native language instruction for those districts that desire Native language programs. AASB also urges Congress to clarify the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to bring it into compliance with the Native American Languages Act and to support opportunities for American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander students to retain and use Native American languages, including adequate funding for programs that can support Native language instruction.

**Rationale.** The heritage languages of the Indigenous Peoples of the United States have become endangered. The extinction of languages would further erode the rich heritage of the Indigenous Peoples of the United States. The technology exists to provide satellite language instruction in the Native tongues to communities throughout the United States. If we as a nation do not respond to this need to preserve this rich linguistic heritage, these languages will become extinct. Financial support from the government for the preservation of Native languages would enable the use of a technology that has helped speed the loss of indigenous languages to reverse that trend. In today's modern world technology and global issues make it necessary for our children to become proficient in English. Learning English, however, should not be at the expense of indigenous language programs. *Amended 1998, 1999, 2004, 2008, 2010 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

#### **5.4 COMMUNITY SCHOOL PROGRAMS**

AASB recommends that the Community Schools Act of 1980 be reinstated and the state explore independent funding status for Alaska's Community School programs.

**Rationale.** AASB recognizes that *Community School Programs* extend the concept of public education beyond the traditional K-12 program of "schooling" and views everyone in the community as both teacher and learner. Tight budgets and state demands for strict accountability have placed community schools programs in competition with district academic priorities. *Amended 2001, 2004, 2008, 2009 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

#### **5.5 INCREASING STUDENT CONTACT TIME**

The Association of Alaska School Boards supports allowing school districts to expand the school day or to expand the school year, with adequate state funding, to account for state mandated student testing, professional development, collaboration/planning, and/or increased instructional contact time, according to local district needs.

**Rationale.** The lack of time is identified as one of the top challenges facing schools when it comes to effective schooling and raising student achievement. Education Summit of 2000 participants identified the need for more time to align curriculum, more student contact time (day/week/year), more teacher preparation time, more time for professional development, reducing the loss of instructional time. This would allow more time for remediation efforts, time to communicate test results, work with public expectations and collaborate with appropriate entities.

In addition, policymakers have decreased student contact time through state mandates that require additional testing days and related professional development requirements that potentially impact student achievement. The most important challenge is an inadequate amount of time on task by students. Educators need time to make sure that each student has a solid foundation before moving him/her to the next level. *Adopted 2000, Amended 2001, 2002, 2003, 2008 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

#### **5.6 ENCOURAGING CIVIC EDUCATION IN SCHOOL DISTRICTS**

AASB encourages member districts to develop well-articulated curriculum for civic education (local, state and national in a global context) for students and provide effective teaching strategies for civic instruction, including meaningful student government opportunities at all levels.

**Rationale.** In HCR 6, the 25<sup>th</sup> Alaska Legislature noted that residents place a high priority on meaningful civic learning in our schools, and "it is the responsibility of each generation of Americans to teach the next generation how democracy works." While some schools in Alaska have developed excellent civics education curriculum, the legislature declared "there has been a steady decline in the attention paid to advancing civic learning opportunities, locally, statewide and nationally." AASB believes that civics content can be integrated into reading, writing and math instruction without diminishing attention to tested subjects. AASB believes civics education should be a matter for local districts, rather than a statewide mandate. A citizen's task force studying the issue of improving civics education in Alaska schools met in 2008 and gave an oral report to the legislature. It was a preliminary report. AASB encourages the legislature to facilitate the task force completing its report *Adopted 2007. Amended 2008, 2009, 2010 (Sunset Nov. 2017)*

### **5.7 REQUESTING THE ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT TO PROVIDE STANDARDS-BASED ASSESSMENTS IN ALASKA NATIVE INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES**

AASB requests the state to provide standardized assessments in the Alaska Native indigenous languages, as requested by the individual districts.

**Rationale.** Students who have a strong first language in their ethnic group perform better academically. Students who learn English as a second language with a strong first language do better academically on standardized tests. Culturally responsive curriculum that uses the local language and cultural knowledge provides the foundation for the rest of the curriculum and implements the goals of the State of Alaska's Cultural Standards, as well as the State of Alaska Content and Performance Standards. *Adopted 2007 Amended 2015 (Sunset Nov. 2017)*

### **5.8 SUPPORTING REGIONAL CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION CENTERS**

AASB supports funding regional career and technical education centers, both new and pre-existing, to support the goals of public education. Centers could establish partnerships with the private sector to help fund training programs leading to employment of students in a broad range of careers. This funding should also include monies for student housing.

**Rationale.** The existing system of funding vocational education has failed to provide appropriate vocational training opportunities in schools across the state. *Adopted 2008 Amended 2009, 2012 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

### **5.9 URGING FLEXIBILITY IN TESTING TO SUPPORT INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE PROGRAMS**

AASB urges the Alaska Legislature to join with school districts in opposing those aspects of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that are detrimental to rural, largely Native school districts, including testing programs that inaccurately assess Alaska Native and rural Alaska students. In addition, AASB urges the state to reexamine its own testing programs with regard to these issues.

**Rationale.** The current ESEA reauthorization process is an opportunity to improve the existing law. Since 2001, ESEA has lacked the flexibility needed to support English Language Learners in indigenous communities. ELL programs disadvantage indigenous communities that wish to perpetuate their values, culture and traditions in their public schools through their language. ELL mandates inaccurately assess Alaska Native students and inadvertently affect language programs negatively. *Adopted 2008, Amended 2010, 2014, 2015 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

### **5.10 SUPPORTING UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR ALASKA'S 3- AND 4-YEAR-OLD LEARNERS**

AASB strongly supports full implementation and funding of a voluntary education program for every 3- and 4-year-old child in Alaska.

**Rationale.** The foundation of cognition is established early in childhood, and research clearly demonstrates the efficacy of educational programming for 3- and 4-year-olds. Access to these programs is important for every child in Alaska. *Adopted 2008, Amended 2010, 2012 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

### **5.11 ENCOURAGING DISTRICTS TO ADOPT STANDARDS FOR PARENT/FAMILY INVOLVEMENT PROGRAMS**

AASB encourages the Alaska Legislature to provide funding for district efforts to develop, implement and regularly evaluate their parent involvement programs using, as models, the Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools and the National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs.

**Rationale.** The National Standards are supported by the National School Boards Association and more than 40 other national education, health and parent involvement groups and developed by National PTA in cooperation with education and parent involvement professionals.

AASB has affirmed the importance of parent involvement in Belief Statements B.11, B.17 and B.18. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) also recognizes the significance of and requires effective parent involvement programs that incorporate the six National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs, including communicating, parenting, student learning, volunteering, school decision-making and advocacy and collaborating with the community to engage parents, provide parents with clearly and timely information about ESEA and develop effective advocates. *Adopted 2008, Amended 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014 (Sunset Nov. 2018)*

### **5.12 URGING CONTINUATION OF THE ALASKA NATIVE EDUCATION ACT**

AASB urges Congress and the President to support continuation of the Alaska Native Educational Equity, Support and Assistance Act as a critical way to engage families and communities in better supporting student success, and align school and community efforts to create safe, healthy, culturally responsive and opportunity-rich environments that support a high level of success for all students.

**Rationale.** Since its adoption in 2002 as Title 7 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (NCLB), the Alaska Native Education Act has provided supplemental benefits to Alaska school districts and Alaska Native students. Congress recognized then that too many Alaska Native children enter and leave the school system with serious educational handicaps, including low test scores and high dropout rates. The Alaska Native Education Act was enacted and funded to address these problems through improved curricula, better teaching practices, family literacy programs, cultural exchanges, community engagement programs and career preparation activities.

The Alaska Initiative for Community Engagement is a statewide initiative that effectively enlists families, school boards, districts, schools, educators, Alaska native organizations, businesses, community organizations, artists and arts organizations, faith communities, and young people themselves in improving the academic and social outcomes for youth. The success of this investment in Alaska Native students is evident in a 2009 report by the American Institutes for Research. The report on the impact of the Alaska Initiative for Community Engagement (Alaska ICE), which is funded through the Alaska Native Education Act, shows positive changes, especially for Native students, in schools and communities supported by Alaska ICE, including an increased level of expectations of Native students, improvements in school climate, increased levels of adult support for youth in the community, significantly reduced risk behaviors (including vandalism, fights, alcohol and drug use) and higher proficiency rates on statewide academic assessments. *Adopted 2009, Amended 2010, 2015 (Sunset Nov. 2019)*

### **5.13 RELATING TO POSTSECONDARY CLASSES FOR SECONDARY STUDENTS**

AASB believes that students who are enrolled in state-funded institutions offering dual credit college or post secondary CTE classes should have the cost funded by the state.

**Rationale.** State law encourages students to take college credits or vocational school credits at the expense of their school districts. It is in the interest of the state to help students maintain interest in school and advance toward a college degree or vocational education certificate. Some high school students want to take college or vocational courses prior to high school graduation. Reasons vary, but oftentimes students may be ready for a greater challenge than what is currently being offered at their high school, or may wish to “try out” classes that increase college readiness before committing to a degree program. Some students seek more advanced career and technical training than what may be offered in their district. A limiting factor for many students is cost. The cost for this post-secondary education should not *be required to* be borne by school districts. Therefore, it is reasonable to ask the state to fund these courses. *Adopted 2009, Amended 2010, 2014 (Sunset Nov. 2019)*

#### **5.14 URGING THE LEGISLATURE TO RECOGNIZE THE TRUE AND IMPROVING RATE OF ALASKA HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION**

AASB encourages the Alaska Legislature to recognize that the graduation rate for Alaska high school students has steadily improved since 2005.

**Rationale.** The Department of Education & Early Development calculates that 71 percent of students in the class of 2013 graduated within four years, and nearly 75 percent within five years. *Adopted 2011 Amended 2012, 2014 (Sunset Nov. 2016)*

#### **5.15 SUPPORTING ASSESSMENTS TO MEASURE PROGRESS**

AASB supports state funding to provide the full cost of equipment, computer and technology technicians, and network upgrades specifically necessary to meet current and future mandated assessments and life-cycle replacement of hardware, software, and related technology.

**Rationale.** MAP and other assessments are used to adjust and monitor instruction and provide a data point on how a district or child performs. AASB recognizes the fact that assessments are only a snap shot of an individual at a point in time and may not be an accurate reflection of progress in learning. Students need more than one type of assessment to be reflective of academic progress. Some students are affected by text anxiety, others by cultural factors, and some test better in performance evaluations instead of pen and paper. The current network capabilities of school districts should be considered in the implementation of assessments. State funding should be provided to cover the full cost of equipment, computer technicians and network upgrades to meet any mandated assessments as well as life-cycle replacement. *Adopted 2015*

#### **5.16 SUPPORT OF PUBLIC SCHOOL LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT GRANT PROGRAM**

AASB strongly supports the Public School Library Development Grant Program and the State Board of Education and Early Development adopted regulations pertaining to Alaska State Statute 14.56.360-375, providing for annual funding for strong broadly based school library collections in support of school curriculum offerings.

**Rationale.** Research indicates that reading for enjoyment is important for children’s education success (OECD 202); schools with new collections in their libraries have higher test scores (Illinois 2005); and student achievement is higher in schools that house larger collections of traditional print resources as well as online resources (Pennsylvania 2000). *Adopted 2012 (Sunset Nov. 2017)*

**5.17 URGING THE LEGISLATURE TO CHANGE ALASKA STATE STATUTE 14.07.030 TO ALLOW FOR ELEMENTARY AGE STUDENTS WHO HAVE BEEN DISPLACED DUE TO A SCHOOL CLOSING TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR THE STATE BOARDING HOME PROGRAM.**

AASB urges the Alaska Legislature to change the language of state statute AS 14.07.030 by removing the specific “secondary” student eligibility criteria to allow elementary age students who have been displaced from a community when a local school has been closed due to enrollment below 10 students to be eligible for state funding through the State Boarding Home Program. A change to this Statute will allow the Department of Education and Early Development to make necessary changes to regulation to address the needs of these displaced elementary age students.

**Rationale.** Many small schools in rural Alaska have been forced to close due to student enrollments falling below the state-funding minimum of 10 students. Students who remain in these villages are required to seek out and secure other educational opportunities including moving to another community in the region that continues to have a school.

The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development’s boarding home program allows school districts to receive reimbursement for the stipend paid to boarding home parents of students that qualify for the program. The state has clear definitions about the eligibility of students that qualify for the boarding home program in 4 ACC 09.050.

Currently to meet the state’s eligibility requirements, a student must “be a secondary student who does not have daily access to a high school by being transported a reasonable distance.”

The boarding home program currently provides a stipend to host parents to assist with the costs related to the education and housing of a boarding home student. The boarding home program also provides or reimburses the cost of transportation for one-round trip airfare from the student’s home village to the in-district village in which they are attending high school.

With the closure of rural small schools, needs have arisen for parents of elementary age students to seek out alternative educational placements for their children. Presently, students from closed elementary schools whose families have remained in their home community have enrolled students in another community’s elementary school, but those students do not qualify for the State Boarding Home Program. This causes an added financial burden on both the parent(s) and the host family to meet the student’s travel, food and lodging needs. *Adopted 2012 (Sunset Nov. 2017)*

**5.18 URGING CHANGES TO MANDATED STATE TESTING**

AASB urges the Department of Education & Early Development to clarify and alter the Alaska mandated testing requirements. AASB strongly recommends the delay of the Alaska Measures of Progress, so that we can collaboratively develop an effective, comprehensive assessment framework that accurately reflects student learning that is useful in guiding and informing student instruction. In addition, AASB supports reverting to the previous terminology in the Standards Based Assessments to designate 4-advanced, 3-proficient, 2-below proficiency and 1-far below proficiency.

**Rationale.** The current mandated assessment, AMP does not provide districts and families immediate feedback to inform instruction. There are currently nationally norm referenced assessments used by districts that provide immediate feedback in ELA and Math that would better meet the educational needs for the students and families in Alaska.



The AMP achievement levels differ in terminology from the SBA by using a 1-4 scale but designate 1-2 as “meets partially” and 3-4 as “meets” the standards. These terms do not describe the achievement levels and are confusing and vague.

#### **5.19 SUPPORTING AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENTS**

AASB strongly supports district that are undertaking efforts to develop and implement authentic assessments and asks that the state recognize these as legitimate alternative ways of accurately assessing student learning.

**Rationale.** An authentic assessment is defined as “an assessment composed of performance tasks and activities designed to simulate or replicate important real-world challenges” wherein students are asked “to use knowledge in real-world ways, with genuine purposes, audiences, and situational variables.” (Wiggins and McTighe, 2005). State and federally mandated assessments do not take into account the “distinctive social organizations, linguistic patterns, cognitive styles, motivations and values of the local community.” (Demmert, et al, 2006) severely limiting the ways in which Native students in particular demonstrate learning. The creation of district level authentic assessments directly tied to pedagogy compatible with Native epistemological philosophies provides for a wider repertoire of assessments by which students validate learning. By supporting the efforts to districts to develop authentic assessments, AASB can facilitate the empowerment of boards to increase the academic success and increase the graduation rates of all students, including Alaska Native students who are grounded in their cultural identity, with the ability to successfully pursue their goals. *Adopted 2015*