



February 20, 2015

Senator Mike Dunleavy  
Chairman, Senate Education Committee  
Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Representative Wes Keller  
Chairman, House Education Committee  
Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Senator Dunleavy and Representative Keller:

As you requested, the Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA) and the Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB) have worked together to produce a list of potential efficiencies and cost savings in K-12 education that are responsive to the current fiscal shortfall. ACSA surveyed its membership and AASB worked through an exercise with its membership to create the following list. This coversheet identifies areas jointly identified.

Efficiencies or cost savings identified across both entities include the following:

1. **The 70 percent rule** ([AS 14.17.520](#)): How much time and expense are devoted to collecting data to comply with this law at the district and state level? The rule itself applies an arbitrary percentage to a complex system.
  - Repeal of AS 14.17.520 requested, per AASB Resolution 2.20.
2. Streamline and share costs associated with new [teacher evaluation](#) requirements by creating models that could be used by districts. The State Board of Education should revise the requirements to allow districts flexibility in implementing the use of student test scores in teacher evaluations. More than fifty districts creating teacher evaluation and administrative evaluation tools is duplicative, an unfunded mandate, and is time intensive.
  - a. AASB resolution 4.13 *“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.”*

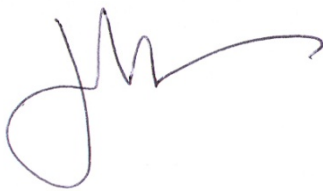
2. **Mandated training.** <http://education.alaska.gov/ELearning/> Districts are required to train employees to recognize sexual abuse, prevent suicides, administer CPR and first aid, restrain and isolate students in emergencies, among many. Many of these requirements were approved with fiscal notes showing no cost at the state level, but require substantial effort and expense to comply with at the district level. Identify those trainings that could be eliminated or changed to a multi-year cycle. Another example is technology assessments for teachers (which should not apply to elementary schools, pre-school teachers, gym teachers, music teachers, etc.). <https://www.eed.state.ak.us/mandatedtraining/>
3. Both ACSA and AASB have strongly advocated elimination of the mandatory **PERS termination studies and “below the floor” charges.** (AS 39.35.255). The contribution floor that requires the studies and past service cost payments to PERS/TRS in excess of 22 percent for employees who are separating from service is outdated and onerous for local governments and school districts.
4. Expand **technology and broadband capability** in communities and districts to reduce the cost of providing basic instruction in some districts; the delivery of services by licensed professionals to students; the acquisition of textbooks and other curriculum materials, and the cost of performing tests and assessments.
5. Allow districts to **rehire retired** individuals (at least temporarily) to fill crucial employment needs. Districts should be able to hire who they need for superintendents, principals, teachers and other staff positions by accessing a pool of seasoned professionals that are currently statutorily excluded from consideration.
6. Streamline **school maintenance** reporting requirements.
7. **Consolidation of student information supplied to the state:** Many of the reports provided to state and federal agencies from the school are repeated. Examples include much of the District Report Card, reporting of dropouts to the Alaska Military Academy, pre-school reports, and AK STEPP.
8. Allow school districts and municipalities to share interest earned on school district funds in **centralized treasuries.**
9. Clarify that the responsibility for the cost of **physical examinations** for kindergarten students rests with parents or guardians, not school districts. Reference AS14.30.070. Some physicals (such as for kindergarteners) could be eliminated, and perhaps the schedule could be stretched.
10. Consider a **biennial cycle** for adopting the state budget. Local governments and school districts would likely follow. An alternative would be to forward-fund K-12 education or adopt K-12 budget bill early in each session to better coordinate state and local budget processes.

11. Eliminate the requirement of **preschool teachers** that are certificated to be fingerprinted and background checked twice.
12. Eliminate the requirement for district run **pre-school facilities** to be reapproved by local fire marshals.
13. Eliminate the district's responsibility to pay for **mandatory health exams** for staff.
14. Provide incentives to districts to **share in health care pools**.
15. Provide state models for **opt-out testing** as opposed to being created by individual districts.
16. Increase the **10 percent ceiling** on reserves, which can be in conflict with requirements for bond reserves needed to retain low interest rates.
17. Include a **local fiscal note** in addition to the state fiscal note on any legislation that is introduced.

Attached please find the full survey results from the ACSA membership. We appreciate very much the chance to provide input as we all work together to move education forward within the constraints of current fiscal realities.

We look forward to being a resource to you as the legislative session moves forward.

Best regards,



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Executive Director, AASB



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