

2021 Legislative Talking Points



ADEQUATE, RELIABLE, AND PREDICTABLE PUBLIC EDUCATION FUNDING

Public education funding is a top priority for school boards, superintendents, staff, students, and parents. COVID-19 COVID grant funds are being used to pay for teachers, summer school, academic gaps, but once they're gone, they're gone. Grants are not intended for long term sustainability. Other state-supported funding such as Power Cost Equalization PCE also has significant impacts on Alaska's education system. *(AASB Belief 7, Resolutions 2.1, 2.2, 2.50)*

MENTAL HEALTH AND STUDENT SAFETY

AASB and school boards across the state see the effect of limited mental health support systems for our students, staff, and communities. The COVID-19 pandemic impact has exacerbated conditions resulting in higher incidents of suicide, child abuse, neglect, and dramatically poorer student success and connectedness to their schools. AASB and school districts across the state advocate for resources, professionals, and programs to help with the long-term impacts of mental illness and the pandemic effects. *(AASB Belief 9, Resolution 2.12, 2.51)*

INTERNET CONNECTIVITY AND BROADBAND ACCESS

The COVID-19 pandemic has truly exposed the inequity of educational opportunities across the state, no matter if students are located in an urban or rural setting. Students of poverty and students of color have been disproportionately affected, resulting in reduced student success and increased risks to student wellness. School systems had no choice but to move to distance delivery, but not all students had adequate equitable access. ***No current bills. Need full funding of E-rate by the Congress and the FCC.*** *(Resolution 2.11, 2.41, 2.57, 5.2)*

SUPPORTING LITERACY AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

School boards across the state **strongly agree** that reading proficiency by the 3rd grade is one of the most important educational priorities to ensure students' greatest opportunity to graduate and become successful adults. Culturally responsive programs and resources are needed to specifically support increased literacy proficiency, especially in light of the pandemic effects. *(AASB Belief 19, Resolutions 2.34, 2.35, 2.6, 5.23)*

SUPPORT TEACHER RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT

Alaska faces a teacher retention and recruitment crisis that severely impacts school districts' ability to meet the basic needs of providing a quality education for every child every day. In particular, rural school districts struggle to attract and retain teachers due to housing, wages, benefits, retirement, and remoteness. Alaska must do more to "grow its own" teachers that are familiar with the Alaskan challenges and cultures. *(AASB Belief 18, Resolutions 2.4, 4.1, 4.5, 4.7)*