

2022 Legislative Talking Points



MENTAL HEALTH AND STUDENT SAFETY

Students and staff face a crisis from a lack of mental health services provided by mental health professionals. The COVID-19 pandemic 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 strongly advocate for resources, professionals, and programs to help with mental illness impacts. *(AASB Belief 9, Resolution 2.12, 2.51; HB60/SB80)*

ADEQUATE, RELIABLE, AND PREDICTABLE PUBLIC EDUCATION FUNDING

Public education funding is a top priority for school boards, superintendents, staff, students, and parents. While COVID-19 funds have helped pay for teachers, summer school, academic gaps, they are not intended to be long-term, sustained funding. Alaska's school infrastructure is in need dire need of significant investment for repair or replacement. Other state-supported funding, such as Power Cost Equalization (PCE), has substantial impacts on Alaska's education system. *(AASB Belief 7, Resolutions 2.1, 2.2, 2.50; HB259,272 &273)*

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 support increased literacy proficiency, especially in light of the pandemic effects. *(AASB Belief 19, Resolutions 2.34, 2.35, 2.6, 5.23; HB164 & SB111)*

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 familiar with the Alaskan challenges and cultures. *(AASB Belief 18, Resolutions 2.4, 4.1, 4.5, 4.7; HB18,19, HB220)*