

association of ALASKA school boards

Where We Stand
2027

WORKING DRAFT #4

The resolutions and belief statements of the Association of Alaska School Boards

Based on the actions of the AASB Delegate Assembly

November 16, 2025

[Note: Sunsetting resolutions are highlighted in yellow]

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Note: Portions of the *Rationale statements* in this document were developed with the support of AI tools and finalized through review and revision by staff.

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 REAAs and allows them in city and borough school districts. Regional School boards have delegated authority and responsibility to those advisory school boards. Regional School Boards 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. Additionally, in accordance with AS 14.03.130 school districts shall inform all affected persons at the school of their right not to participate in the pledge.

Adopted 2013
Amended 2015, 2018

FUNDING

B.7 EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND FUNDING AS TOP PRIORITY

Article VII, Sec. 1 of The Alaska State Constitution states "The Legislature shall by general law 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 and tribes**.** AASB calls upon the Governor and the Alaska Legislature to make early, sustainable, adequate and equitable funding a top priority for the exemplary education of our youth.

Amended 2003, 2005, 2006, 2008, 2017, 2018

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, 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 consider the impact of their mandates and to take responsibility by fully funding or repealing them.

Amended 1999, 2015, 2016

B.9 MEETING SCHOOL FACILITY NEEDS FOR ALASKA STUDENTS

AASB believes that the Alaska State Legislature and the Governor must adequately fund the constitutionally mandated need for educationally appropriate school facilities and major school maintenance.

Amended 1998, 2002, 2006, 2009, 2014, 2015, 2016

B.10 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.

Adopted 2020

CHILD ADVOCACY

Preamble
As community leaders committed to education and the equal opportunity for each child to achieve their 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 Alaska legislature, tribal governments, agencies, municipalities, 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, 2019

B.11 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 while creating an environment that supports children to thrive and be empowered to choose a path to success in their future.

Amended 1998, 2019

B.12 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 and reflects the ethnic, linguistic and cultural identity of the student populations. In particular AASB honors and celebrates those languages and cultures indigenous to Alaska, and supports those efforts that revitalize languages and integrate indigenous languages and cultural knowledge into the delivery of academic programs.

Amended 1998, 2007, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2018

B.13 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 recognizes 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.14 SUPPORTING SOBRIETY AND SUBSTANCE USE PREVENTION

AASB acknowledges the complexities of Alaska's drug and alcohol history. AASB encourages Board Members, school staff, students, parents and community members to help in overcoming the hardships of drug and alcohol addictions. AASB supports efforts of schools and communities to become and remain free of alcohol and drug use through activities that:

- encourage the formation of sobriety groups in Alaska's communities;
- 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 the science of addiction;
- and encourage and support sober role models.

Amended 2007, 2010, 2013, 2019, 2023

B.15 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 and intervention for children at risk. AASB also supports culturally responsive partnerships between schools, parents/ guardians, and communities to provide prevention and intervention services. AASB supports providing training and support for healthy relationship development including educating students on the signs of dating violence and other risks, and how to reach out for help.

Amended 2002, 2006, 2008, 2019, 2025

B.16 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 and any other governing body within the school district.

Amended 1998, 2007, 2008, 2013

B.17 DECLARING CHILDREN THE TOP PRIORITY OF ALASKA

AASB believes children are the top priority of our state. AASB encourages the Alaska Legislature and the Governor to declare our children as the top priority for our state and our most valuable resource. This declaration extends to the highest standard of education, health, physical and psychological safety and mental wellness, for the future of our children.

Adopted 2005
Amended 2006, 2008

B.18 EQUITY IN EDUCATION

All children must have access to an educational program that meets their individual physical, academic, cultural, social and emotional needs. The Association of Alaska School Boards believes that the allocation of educational resources including access to technology and connectivity, must provide equity for every student regardless of their economic status, geographic location or the economies of scale.

Adopted 2016

PERSONNEL

B.19 ALASKA NATIVE TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS, AND SCHOOL STAFF HIRE & RETENTION

Studies have shown that Native teachers, administrators and school staff have a very positive effect on students and schools. The hiring and retention of qualified Alaska Native teachers, administrators and school staff has long been supported by educational organizations, **T**ribal governments and Native organizations. AASB strongly urges school districts to recruit qualified Native teachers, administrators, and school staff. Colleges and universities within the state are encouraged to more actively recruit Native students to develop Indigenous certification programs designed to build on the strengths of indigenous peoples and pedagogies. **All schools, colleges** and universities must utilize the expertise of local cultural bearers with Indigenous Knowledge. 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 teachers, administrators and school staff.

Amended 2010, 2011, 2023

B.20 QUALITY STAFF IMPROVES STUDENT LEARNING

High-quality, highly motivated, culturally responsive and innovative teachers, administrators and other staff who are supported and valued are essential for successful student learning and development. Being culturally responsive includes creating opportunities for student to student**, and elder to student** interactions.

Amended 2015, 2023

EDUCATION PROGRAMS

B.21 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. AASB supports sustainable, reliable and adequate State funding for early childhood education.

Amended 1998, 2007, 2012, 2015

B.22 EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT

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

- Parent/Guardian Involvement: Encourage a high degree of caregiver involvement and engagement 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);

- Community engagement: Involve many different sectors of the community in the schools to broaden students' experiences and promote the shared responsibility of adults in our communities to support Alaska's youth to achieve academic success, engage in positive behaviors, and foster the growth of children who are grounded in their cultural identity.

- Student Standards: Include the development of educational programs using best practices including a variety of delivery methods to meet standards and identified competencies that meet the diverse educational and cultural needs of students and prepare them to be healthy, resilient, and productive citizens.

- Professional Standards: Include the highest ethical and professional standards throughout the district.

- Learning Environment: Include adequate and appropriate indoor / outdoor spaces, class sizes, furnishings, equipment, supplies and technology, and be reflective of the cultures of the community.

- Youth Engagement in Education and Decision Making: Create conditions and opportunities for students to share their ideas, experiences, input and voice with decision makers and district leaders. Opportunities should be provided to all students at all levels, and should be supported by trained, caring adults to ensure a safe space to share out and provide input.

*Amended 1998, 2010, 2011, 2015, 2016***,** 2023

B.23 CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY

The strength of our democracy rests in large part on the success of our public schools in educating all students. It also rests on students' deep understanding of accurate, representative histories from the local to the global level. This understanding includes a working knowledge of evolving governmental principles and structure, the importance of citizenship, and civic responsibility. These lessons should begin in preschool and be embedded throughout the school years, including meaningful student government opportunities. Lessons should provide strong grounding for fully informed and involved citizenship. It is the duty of all to teach the next generation how democracy works.

Adopted 2008
Amended 2010, 2012, 2016, 2023

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.

Adopted 1997, 2017
Amended 1999 & 2003, 2015, 2017
Renewed 2022
(Sunsets 2027)

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, creating an extra level of government with the associated costs.

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 Alaska 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.

Adopted 1998
Amended 2001, 2003, 2016
Renewed 2023
(Sunsets 2028)

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) <u>Retains the final decisions of funding appropriations</u>

c) 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

d) Maintains authority to require and enforce accountability, including determining the criteria, standards, or outcomes that will be used in establishing the charter;

e) Ensures that a charter does not foster racial, social, religious or economic segregation or segregation of children with disabilities.

Rationale. Alaska Statute 14.12.020 explicitly states that school districts shall be operated under the "management and control of a school board". Locally elected school boards serve as the most direct form of democratic accountability, ensuring that all educational programs, including charter schools, reflect the unique values, needs, and fiscal realities of their specific communities.

The 2014 passage of HB 278 created a significant challenge to this principle by allowing the Department of Education & Early Development (DEED) to act as an authorizing agency for charter schools that were already rejected at the local level. This state-level overreach undermines local self-determination and can force a district to host a program that may not meet local standards for academic accountability or fiscal sustainability.

Because school boards are responsible for the success of all students in their district, they

must retain the sole authority to approve, monitor, and enforce high standards for charter schools to ensure they provide equitable and high-quality options for every family. Maintaining local authorization ensures that charter schools remain true to their intent as locally developed alternatives that work in partnership with the broader public school system.

Adopted 1997, 2017
Amended 1998, 1999, 2003, 2011, 2014, 2017
Renewed 2022
(Sunsets 2027)

1.4 OPPOSE SCHOOL VOUCHERS

AASB is opposed to using public funds 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.

Adopted 2012, 2017
Amended 2013, 2014, 2015, 2017
Renewed 2022
(Sunsets 2027)

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

AASB urges the Alaska 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
Renewed 2018, 2023
(Sunsets 2028)

1.6 SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

AASB supports the goals of the Every Student Succeeds Act and implementation of the state plan approved on May 16, 2018, in particular AASB supports the emphasis on reaffirming local school board authority over public education and limiting federal and state overreach. AASB urges Congress to fully fund the law and the Alaska state legislature to provide sufficient funds to implement and support the plan.

Rationale. State 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. The accountability system should retain as much local control as possible.

Adopted 2006
Amended 2008, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2018
Renewed 2023
(Sunsets 2028)

1.7 ACCOUNTABILITY AND ADVOCACY FOR STUDENTS OUTSIDE THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

AASB urges the Alaska Legislature to give the State Department of Education and Early Development the authority and funding to register and track the achievement and academic growth 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 schools students are already accountable through statewide assessments.

Rationale. Ensuring that every child in Alaska receives a quality education is a shared responsibility. Public school students enrolled in district-sponsored correspondence and homeschool programs are supported by learning plans, progress monitoring, and statewide assessments. Students educated outside of these systems have varying and, in some cases, limited to no requirements for registration, reporting, and demonstration of academic progress.

While some private or independent home education programs maintain records and administer assessments, these measures are not consistently reported to the state or included in a comparable accountability system. As a result, Alaska lacks a comprehensive and consistent understanding of student enrollment, progress, and outcomes across all educational settings.

In addition, public schools regularly enroll students who have experienced gaps in instruction or limited academic progress, requiring additional supports to help them meet state standards. Establishing a basic level of statewide registration, tracking, and accountability for students educated outside of public schools would help ensure that essential skills are being taught and that all students are making academic progress.

Adopted 2000
Amended 2001, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2014, 2015, 2016
(Sunsets 2026)

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 through 18 unless a student

has graduated high school earlier or is enrolled in a GED or alternative program. Furthermore, AASB encourages the Alaska state legislature to change state law to allow students who are 16-18 years old to enroll in GED programs without withdrawing from school.

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.

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, 2016, 2022, 2023
(Sunsets 2028)

1.9 RECOGNITION OF UNEXCUSED CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM AND TRUANCY IN THE ROLE OF EDUCATION

AASB urges the Alaska Legislature, and the Department of Education and Early Development to support districts in meeting the state's compulsory attendance laws. AASB supports the creation of comprehensive family/guardian education in regard to truancy and the enforcement of truancy laws.

Rationale. It is no longer enough simply to count how many students show up on average for school every day or to concentrate on truancy (unexcused absences). State policy and action can ensure that districts and schools use chronic absence data to trigger a timely response and collaborate with families and community partners to prevent children from missing so much school that they fall behind in their education. Where truancy only addresses unexcused absences, chronic absenteeism, by definition, flags any students who are missing more than 10% of school for any reason. A school district can have an average attendance rate of 90% with up to 30% of their students being chronically absent. When it comes to lost instructional time, an absence is an absence.

AS 14.30.030*. Prevention and Reduction of Truancy*. The governing body of a school district, including a regional educational attendance area (REAA), shall establish procedures to prevent and reduce truancy.

Adopted 2017
Renewed 2022

Amended 2023
(*Sunsets 2028)*

1.10 LOCAL CONTROL FOR THE OPERATION OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS

AASB strongly supports the fundamental right of local control in all facets of the operation of local school districts and decisions affecting the education of public school students. AASB is protective of local ~~control~~ governance to include but not limited to the following:

- AASB is opposed to mandated school district or local school consolidation.
- AASB is opposed to mandated borough formation or consolidation.
- AASB is opposed to any attempt to create alternatives to the creation, operation, or revocation of charters for charter schools. Alaska's charter schools are public schools authorized, supported, and governed by local school boards.
- AASB opposes any overreach into the operation of local schools by both the state and federal government. School boards willingly comply with legislation that provides guidance but opposes regulatory direction beyond the general intent of legislation.
- AASB opposes any legislative intent to determine term limits for school board members. Local communities have the right of self-determination and are the best qualified to make decisions based on what is in the best interest for their students.
- AASB opposes non-legislative changes to the State funding formula, including those that further restrict local governance and decision-making for school funding already outlined in the State funding formula.
- AASB requests the legislature to evaluate the impact of open enrollment in correspondence programs on local districts and municipalities.

Rationale. Self-determination and local control of both Borough/Municipal school districts and Rural Education Attendance Area school districts are granted by the Alaska State Constitution and empowered through Alaska Statutes for these self-determination rights and local control of education. Alaska State Constitution Article 1, Section 2 – "All political power is inherent in the people. All government originates with the people, is founded upon their will only, and is instituted for the good of the people as a whole." Article 10, Section 1 – "The purpose of this article is to provide for maximum local self-government….". Article 10, Section 2 – "All local government powers shall be vested in boroughs and cities…..". AS 14.08.101 – Powers of an REAA Regional School Board and AS 14.14.090 – Duties of a Borough school board provide for broad authority for local school boards to operate, manage, oversee local public schools. "One size fits all" is not a valid or appropriate path for education. Local citizens know best what their students need and are able to discern the most appropriate curriculum, instructional methodology, and cultural nuances that provide the best education for their children.

Adopted 2024

Amended 2025
(Sunsets 2029)

1.11 SUPPORTING LOCAL ~~CONTROL~~ GOVERNANCE FOR DETERMINING SCHOOL BOARD TERM LIMITS AND SECTIONAL REPRESENTATION

AASB supports the fundamental right of local ~~control~~ **governance** in determining the maximum length of service a school board member may serve (i.e., term limit). AASB supports and believes in the principle of local self-determination in regard to length of service and school board member sectional representation within the boundaries of any school district.

Rationale. While the basic structure for school boards is well defined in Alaska statute (AS 14.08.041 and AS 14.12.030) the number of terms an elected school board member may serve is not prescribed by state law. In addition, Alaska statute defers decisions for sectional representation by school board members to local voters within either a Regional Education Attendance Area (REAA)(AS 14.08.051), borough, or city school district. The basic tenet of local, democratically elected control of governance for school districts has long been championed and advocated for by the Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB). Thus, AASB will continue to protect such principles and practices and resist any efforts to create statewide mandates that supersede local control.

Adopted 2019
Renewed 2024
(Sunsets 2029)

1.12 OPPOSING THE REAA REAPPORTIONMENT AND RECASTING OF SEATS FOR REAAS IMPACTED

AASB urges the division of elections, division of community and regional affairs, and the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development to consult with AASB and REAAs before the final reapportioning and recasting of school board member representation occurs.

Rationale. When school districts have invested time, effort, and money to send board members to professional development trainings, that investment is immediately lost if the affected board members can't finish their current terms before the reapportionment becoming effective.

The reapportionment will eliminate some board members that have just been re-elected to their respective seats that results in our current board members running against each other. It will also force some to have to run consecutive years just to stay on

Adopted 2022
(Sunsets 2027)

1.13 LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

AASB honors and respects the Ancestral Lands on which all Alaskans live, work, play, and learn and encourages activities and practices that acknowledge and recognize the past and present stewardship of these lands.

AASB supports the following:
1. Having a Land Acknowledgement spoken, for all to hear, on a regular basis, including but not limited to its official meetings, conferences, celebrations, and gatherings.
2. Working with local Tribes to identify appropriate wording for a Land Acknowledgement.
3. Encouraging member School Boards to add a Land Acknowledgement before official meetings, conferences, celebrations, and gatherings.

Rationale.
"A Land Acknowledgement is a formal statement recognizing the Indigenous people of a place. It is a public gesture of appreciation for the past and present Indigenous stewardship of the lands that we now occupy. Land Acknowledgement opens a space with gratefulness and respect for the contributions, innovations, and contemporary perspective of Indigenous peoples. It is an actionable statement that marks our collective movement towards decolonization and equity." Anchorage Museum

A. Almost 20% of Alaska's population identifies as American Indian or Alaska Native, by far the highest of any state.
B. A Land Acknowledgment opens a space with gratefulness and respect for the contributions, innovations, and contemporary perspective of Indigenous peoples. It is an actionable statement that marks our collective movement towards decolonization and equity.
C. Alaska Native Tribes and their descendants have lived and subsisted on Alaska's lands and waters for thousands of years.
D. These lands and waters have been cared for through traditions passed from generation to generation.

Adopted 2021
Amended 2025
(*Sunsets 2030)*

1.14 TRIBAL GOVERNMENT AND TRIBAL SCHOOLS

AASB supports the development of Tribal Schools through the state compacting process which have true autonomy separate from their local public school district. AASB recognizes the sovereignty of tribal governments and that the local, impacted tribe(s) should determine how tribal schools should be governed and operated. AASB supports the work that Tribes and DEED have successfully completed through the State Tribal Education Compacting process which includes recommended legislation.

Rationale. Many of the current requirements for public schools under Alaska statutes and regulations and the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development can perpetuate the harm imposed on Alaska Native children by the westernized school system. Tribal compacting is a step in the right direction to return self-determination to Alaska Native tribes for the education of their children, but independent autonomy for many aspects of curriculum, instruction and assessment must be allowed to truly recognize the rights of Alaska Native tribes to self-govern. This will support the ability of tribal schools to revitalize Indigenous languages and fully incorporate culture into every aspect of schooling without imposition of Western expectations and bureaucracy.

Adopted 2023
Amended 2025
(Sunsets 2030)

1.15 URGING THE STATE TO FULFILL TRIBAL CONSULTATION OBLIGATIONS

AASB urges the State of Alaska to fulfill its federal tribal consultation obligations under ESSA, which emphasizes collaboration with tribal leaders to improve educational outcomes for Native students. The State and local school boards should ensure that meaningful engagement with tribal governments is incorporated into all relevant educational planning and decision-making processes. Engaging in meaningful, timely consultation with Alaska Native tribes, will ensure that their perspectives are incorporated into the development and revision of state education plans. This process must be conducted according to processes and definitions created in collaboration with tribes and adhering to the requirements of ESSA.

Further, the state should continue to develop systems and dedicate funding to support continued engagement with tribes as part of this consultation, enhancing collaboration between local school boards and tribes to drive educational improvements for Alaska Native students. This work includes ensuring that consultation extends beyond compliance, fostering long-term partnerships that integrate tribal insight, innovation, and commitment to local educational efforts. AASB supports the establishment of structured processes that allow for the ongoing exchange of data, resources, and feedback between the state, Local Education Agencies (LEAs), and tribal entities. The state should also provide tools, guidelines, and technical support to local school districts to ensure that tribal voices are consistently included in district plans and programs, especially in

districts with significant Alaska Native student populations or those receiving Title VI funding. By promoting a sustained, collaborative approach, the state can better honor its obligations and support the local control of education that reflects the cultural values and needs of tribal communities.

Rationale. Tribal consultation is a federal requirement under ESSA for State Education Agency (SEAs) that receive Title Funding and LEAs that receive Title VI funding or have a substantial Alaska Native student population. However, there are gaps in the consistent application of these requirements. Ensuring meaningful tribal consultation allows for the integration of cultural knowledge, innovative educational practices, and community engagement, which can significantly improve the educational outcomes of Native students. By urging the state to fulfill its obligations and provide support, school boards can foster stronger partnerships between LEAs and tribal governments, contributing to more culturally relevant, responsive, and effective education for the community.

Engagement with tribal governments allows for the inclusion of local insights, fostering a more collaborative and inclusive approach to education. When the state develops systems that facilitate ongoing consultation, it enables LEAs to better align their educational strategies with the needs of Alaska Native students. The result is not only compliance with federal law but also an opportunity to support local control and community-driven education that reflects the values, languages, and cultural practices of the tribes. This partnership approach will strengthen student success and ensure long-term community involvement in education.
Adopted 2024, Amended 2025, (Sunsets 2030)

1.16 APPOINTMENTS OF STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION & EARLY DEVELOPMENT MEMBERS REPRESENTING SPECIFIC JUDICIAL DISTRICTS

AASB supports the mission and vision of the Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development, and encourages Board members appointed to represent a specific judicial district reside in that judicial district for equitable representation.

Rationale. Appointments to the Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development are outlined in AS 14.07.085. AS 14.07.085 provides that members of the board shall be appointed by the governor subject to confirmation by a majority of the members of the legislature in joint session. One member shall be appointed from each of the four judicial districts and three from the state at large, with at least one member representing regional education attendance areas. Appointees from a judicial district should reside in the district they represent as required by law and to adequately represent the interests of the school districts within each judicial district. Representation from each judicial district provides balanced representation from all school districts across the state and is important for equal and fair representation.

Adopted 2024
(Sunsets 2029)

1.17 RESOLUTION TO AFFIRM AND PRESERVE LOCAL GOVERNANCE OF VOLUNTARY OPEN ENROLLMENT POLICIES

The Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB) supports the preservation of local school board authority to establish and manage voluntary open enrollment policies within and across school district boundaries. AASB opposes any state-mandated policy that imposes compulsory open enrollment on a first-come, first-served basis, which would diminish local decision-making and potentially displace students residing within established school attendance boundaries.

AASB encourages codifying the principle of voluntary open enrollment under local governance, including the authority to define enrollment windows, determine class and school capacity, and prioritize students based on locally adopted criteria such as residency, family connections, and staffing resources. The resolution affirms the right of school boards to adopt enrollment policies that serve all public school students and that reflect the unique geographic, demographic, and fiscal circumstances of their communities while supporting statewide collaboration where locally desired.

Rationale
Alaska's geography and diversity of school district size and location make a one-size-fits-all mandate for open enrollment impractical and inequitable. In many regions, open enrollment is logistically impossible due to transportation and budget limitations. The overwhelming majority of cross-boundary open enrollment occurs between just two districts—Anchorage and Matanuska-Susitna—and is already being managed through existing local policies and agreements.

Mandatory open enrollment policies that prioritize access solely by order of application risk displacing students from their neighborhood schools, disrupting family stability, and undermining local planning and budgeting. They also shift the focus of school improvement toward market-style competition, which lacks the evidence-based foundation of approaches that emphasize school leadership, staffing, and systemic support.

Maintaining voluntary open enrollment ensures flexibility and fairness, keeps school boards accountable to their local communities, and reinforces Alaska's tradition of strong local governance in public education.

Adopted 2025
(Sunsets 2030)

1.18 STUDENT DATA PRIVACY AND SCHOOL DISTRICT CYBERSECURITY

AASB urges the Alaska Legislature and the Department of Education and Early Development to provide ~~dedicated funding~~ **support** and technical assistance to help school districts prevent, detect, and respond to cybersecurity incidents affecting student, staff, and district data. AASB further urges the Legislature to establish clear, workable requirements for reporting data breaches to a designated state authority and for notifying affected families and employees within a reasonable timeframe, and to ensure that any new privacy or monitoring requirements account for the operational and financial realities of ~~small and rural~~ **individual** districts.

Rationale. School districts have become high-value targets for cybercriminals because they hold dense concentrations of sensitive data — student academic and health records, Social Security numbers, staff payroll information — while often operating with minimal IT staffing and constrained budgets, particularly in Alaska's small and rural districts.

Dedicated state funding and technical assistance, paired with clear and workable statutory requirements for breach reporting and notification, would give districts the tools and the accountability structure needed to protect student and staff data — while ensuring that any new mandates are scaled to what small and rural districts can realistically implement, so that compliance costs don't outstrip the resources these districts have to meet them.

1.19 RECONSIDERATION OF INSTRUCTIONAL AND LIBRARY MATERIALS

AASB affirms the authority and responsibility of local school boards to adopt clear, written policies governing the selection and reconsideration of instructional and library materials. AASB opposes state mandates that remove this decision-making authority from local boards or that impose statewide reading lists, removal lists, or review processes in place of local reconsideration procedures.

Rationale. Challenges to classroom and library materials have become more frequent and, in some districts, more contentious in recent years, often without a clear or consistently applied local process for handling them. A well-defined reconsideration policy protects both the rights of parents and community members to raise concerns and the professional judgment of educators and librarians in building a collection that serves the whole student body, while preventing individual challenges from disrupting access to materials for all students during an extended review. Because Alaska school boards are best positioned to reflect the values and priorities of their own communities, AASB believes reconsideration processes should remain a matter of local board policy rather than uniform state law.

1.20 PROTECTING EDUCATIONAL ACCESS AND SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS

AASB supports the right of every child to access a free public K–12 education and a safe, welcoming, and supportive learning environment, regardless of the immigration status of the child or their parents or guardians. AASB urges federal immigration authorities to refrain from enforcement activities on or near school grounds and school transportation routes that may disrupt learning, discourage attendance or family participation, or undermine students' access to education.

AASB encourages member districts to adopt policies and procedures that protect student privacy and guide staff responses to immigration enforcement activities. These policies should address requests for access to school facilities and confidential information in accordance with law.

Rationale. Alaska's public schools serve students and families from diverse cultural, linguistic, and national backgrounds, including immigrant, refugee, and mixed-status families. In *Plyler v. Doe* (1982), the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed that children cannot be denied access to public education because of their immigration status. Protecting this access supports the responsibility of school districts to educate all children in their communities.

Immigration enforcement activities on or near schools can create fear and uncertainty that discourage attendance and reduce families' confidence in schools as safe places for their children. These effects can extend beyond the students and families directly involved, affecting the broader school community.

District policies give staff clear direction when responding to immigration authorities. Training helps staff understand their obligations under the law, including the protection of confidential student information. These practices help sustain the stable learning environments students need to participate fully in their education.

FUNDING

2.1 URGING THE TIMELY, PREDICTABLE, EQUITABLE, AND ADEQUATE FUNDING OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

The timely, predictable, equitable, and adequate funding of public education is of the highest concern to Alaska's citizenry, the parents of its public school students, and its current, past, and future students. While the Base Student Allocation (BSA) received a $700 increase for fiscal year 2026, this adjustment is insufficient. It represents approximately 39% of the total increase needed to fully account for the annual inflation and restore the BSA's purchasing power to its fiscal year 2011 equivalent. The Association of Alaska School Boards strongly supports the following:

- Enact annual legislation establishing the BSA within 45 days of the start of the legislative session, **or forward fund**, so that school districts are able to effectively and efficiently utilize funding for the subsequent school year.
- Enact legislation that annually adjusts the BSA to account for inflation.
- Enact legislation that provides sufficient resources to all students, ensuring they have equal opportunities to meet the state's curriculum and performance standards.
- Require that the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development complies with AS 14.17.460 by monitoring the District Cost Factor and preparing and submitting proposed district cost factors to the Legislature by January 15 of every other fiscal year.
- Fully fund the Public Education Fund (AS 14.17.300) for the subsequent year to ensure education funding will be in place prior to the school district date required for submittal of district budgets to DEED.

Rationale. To comply with Article VII, Section 1 of the Alaska Constitution, the Alaska Legislature is responsible for maintaining a system of public schools and funding them in accordance with AS 14.17. Alaska's public school students depend on this constitutional and statutory commitment to ensure they receive an education that prepares them to contribute to Alaska's future.

While the Legislature approved a $700 increase to the Base Student Allocation (BSA) for FY26, this adjustment restores only a portion of the BSA's lost purchasing power. As a result, districts continue to face structural budget gaps that affect their ability to maintain programs, retain staff, and meet rising operational costs.

Delays or uncertainty in the annual funding process further compound these challenges. When school districts cannot reliably anticipate their funding level, they are forced to issue preliminary layoff notices, postpone program planning, or reduce services. This instability affects Alaska's teachers and school staff, undermining recruitment and retention efforts and adding stress to an already strained workforce.

A quality public education is only achievable when funding is adequate, equitable, timely, and predictable. Updating the BSA annually for inflation, maintaining accurate district cost factors, and fully funding the Public Education Fund in advance are essential steps to ensure every student—regardless of where they live—has access to the opportunities they need to succeed.

Adopted 2024
Amended 2025
(*Sunsets 2030)*

2.2 ENSURING EQUITABLE FUNDING FOR ALASKA'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS

AASB urges the Alaska Legislature to take the following actions:

a. Revise the hold-harmless threshold from 5% to 2.5% for reductions in average daily membership.
b. Adopt a new three-year hold-harmless provision for school districts that consolidate existing facilities to increase efficiency.
c. Provide temporary funding assistance for up to two years for schools with fewer than the minimum number of students.
d. Provide partial foundation funding for small, rural schools with 7-9 students at the following rates for up to two years:
    Seven (7) students = 70% funding
    Eight (8) students = 80% funding
    Nine (9) students = 90% funding
e. Maintain the current minimum student count of 10 students as the base level of funding for a school building in the Public School Funding Program formula.

Rationale. Passage of HB 273 by the 25th 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.

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 2024
(Sunsets 2029)

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 and Community Self-Determination Act (SRSCA) provides essential federal support to communities and school districts in Alaska that include non-taxable national forest lands. Approximately two dozen Alaska school districts, particularly in Southeast Alaska, rely on these funds to supplement local revenue and sustain educational programs.

Although Congress has recently reauthorized SRSCA through FY2026, the program remains subject to periodic reauthorization, creating ongoing uncertainty for school districts and communities. This lack of predictability makes it difficult for districts to engage in long-term financial planning and maintain stable educational programs and staffing. In some districts, these funds represent a significant portion of overall revenue. SRSCA was enacted to stabilize funding for rural communities following declines in federal timber receipts and to uphold the federal commitment to share revenues from national forest lands. Moving beyond short-term extensions to permanent reauthorization would provide stable and predictable funding for school districts and communities that have limited ability to generate local tax revenue.

Adopted 2011

Amended 2012, 2014
Renewed 2016, 2021
(Sunsets 2026)

2.4 ENCOURAGING THE ALASKA LEGISLATURE TO FUND A GRANT PROGRAM FOR SCHOOL PERFORMANCE 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 ARTICLE 2 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 Alaska Legislature in 1990, for grants by the Commissioner of Education & Early Development to school districts. It has never been funded by the Alaska 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 Alaska Legislature funded that agreement and a grant system for school improvement strategies.

Adopted 2012
Renewed 2017, 2022
(Sunsets 2027)

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 to ensure a safe and productive learning environment for all 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 liability/legal protections for teachers and advocates.

7. Placement of students and delivery of services.
8. Mediation between school districts and parents/guardians when disagreements develop over student placements and/or services
9. Reduction of excessive paperwork.

Rationale. AASB joins with the National School Boards Association in urging Congress to fairly and fully fund the federal mandate under the IDEA. When IDEA was enacted in 1975 the federal government committed to paying up to 40% of the national average per-pupil expenditure to support the education of students with disabilities. However, five decades later, the federal government provides only about 15% of the promised funding nationwide. The resulting funding gap places a significant financial burden on local school districts, which must subsidize special education costs from their general education budgets.

This chronic underfunding exacerbates many other challenges in the delivery of special education services. Districts face persistent shortages of certified special education teachers and related specialists (school psychologists, speech-language pathologists, physical therapists), worsened by high staff turnover and limited availability of qualified candidates. Additionally, the demands of excessive paperwork and compliance requirements contribute to educator burnout and deter new entrants in the field.

AASB advocates for comprehensive federal and state action to fully fund IDEA, reduce administrative burdens, improve staffing pipelines and retention, and promote effective collaboration between schools and families in support of students with disabilities.

Adopted 2000
Amended 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2005, 2009, 2012 , Renewed 2015, 2020, 2025 (Sunsets 2030)

2.6 RESOURCES TO EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENT THE ALASKA READS ACT

The Association of Alaska School Boards urges the Alaska Legislature to provide funding and resources to effectively implement the mandates of the Alaska Reads Act.

Rationale. School Board members recognize the importance of early literacy. With the passage of the Alaska Reads Act many unfunded mandates were legislated. Alaska school districts face the additional costs of teacher training, additional costs for materials for tier II and III interventions, and the additional costs for staffing in order to provide tier II interventions during the school day as well as tier III interventions after school hours. A plan to examine all the costs associated with the Alaska Reads Act unfunded mandates is needed.

Adopted 2023
(Sunsets 2028)

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
Renewed 2018, 2023
(Sunsets 2028)

2.8 BASE STUDENT ALLOCATION INCREASE

The Base Student Allocation (BSA) was designed to take into account the actual cost of providing public education throughout the State of Alaska. The failure of the annual budget process to take into account the steadily increasing costs of providing a quality education for all of Alaska's students severely hampers the ability to maintain or increase student achievement. The BSA, as originally designed, must be adjusted on an accurate and realistic timeline.

Rationale. Every Alaskan household experiences increasing costs affecting their quality of life. Education is not immune to this same effect. It is disingenuous to allow the BSA to remain at the same level for years on end and at the same time decry the "failure" of education. Inflation is negatively affecting the ability to provide that quality education at the expense of our future leadership. The costs of education materials have unrelentingly increased each year. These costs include commodities, food, wages, recruitment efforts, insurance, fuel, utilities, pupil transportation, travel, aging facilities maintenance, technology, curricula material, staff specialists, and a myriad of other education needs. Multiple one-time increases are not the answer. School districts, rightfully so, are unwilling to make long-term spending plans with one-time increases. The Alaska Legislature must determine the funding needed for public education on an annual basis and adjust the BSA to reflect the amount needed to appropriately educate Alaska's youth.

Adopted 2022
Amended 2024
(Sunsets 2029)

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. Public education is a constitutional responsibility of the State of Alaska, and the current funding formula reflects a shared partnership between the state and municipalities to fulfill that obligation. The required local contribution, calculated as the lesser of 2.65 mills or 45 percent of basic need, establishes a consistent framework for municipal participation in funding public education.

In recent years, state funding has not kept pace with inflation, while state-level interpretations of statute and regulation have increasingly sought to constrain the ability of municipalities to contribute additional local support. Maintaining the current local contribution structure helps preserve stability in the funding formula and supports municipalities in their role as partners in delivering educational services to students.

Adopted 2001
Amended 2004, 2005, 2012, Renewed 2016, 2021
(Sunsets 2026)

2.10 EDUCATION ENDOWMENT

AASB lends its full support to the establishment of an adequately funded and well-managed educational endowment as part of 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 one 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.

Adopted 1997
Amended 1998, 1999, 2002, 2007, 2009, 2012, 2016
Renewed 2017, 2022
(Sunsets 2027)

2.11 FUNDING FOR PUPIL TRANSPORTATION

AASB urges the Alaska Legislature and Administration to provide adequate funding for pupil transportation. Adequate funding includes determining the actual annual cost of pupil transportation for school districts to avoid the necessity of districts subsidizing these costs at the expense of student instruction. Pupil transportation allocations should account for rising fuel prices, increased labor costs, hazardous road conditions, and geographic and weather-related challenges.

Rationale. Pupil transportation is a necessary and vital service to support public education. With darkness occurring during the majority of the school term, hazardous road conditions, and dangers from wildlife, transporting students is necessary for their safety to and from school. Pupil transportation costs continue to increase each year, requiring school districts to subsidize the costs at the expense of classroom funding. Rising costs include fuel, a shortage of drivers, and lack of competition among bus company providers. AS 23.10.065(b) requires bus drivers to be compensated at twice the minimum wage established by the State of Alaska. The rising costs for pupil transportation is beyond the control of local school districts and should be covered through the legislative budget process.

Adopted 2022
Amended 2024, 2025
(Sunsets 2030)

2.12 ENSURING EQUITABLE AND ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR ALASKA'S SCHOOL CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS (CIP)

The Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB) urges the Alaska Legislature and the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) to fund school Capital

Improvement Projects according to the National Council on School Facilities recommendation of spending 4% of a state's schools' current replacement value on capital projects and to improve access to CIP funding for rural and under-resourced districts by streamlining the application process, offering technical assistance, and prioritizing equity in project selection.

AASB urges the Alaska Legislature to fulfill statutory commitments by fully funding all incurred and future bond indebtedness reimbursements in accordance with AS. 14.11.005, to fully fund the Major Maintenance Grant fund in accordance with AS. 14.11.007, and to fully fund the Rural Education Attendance Area & Small Municipal School District School Fund in accordance with AS 14.11.030.

Rationale:
While the National Council on School Facilities recommends spending 4% of a state's schools' replacement value on capital projects, and DEED recommends a minimum annual investment of 3% of building value for capital renewal needs, Alaska continues to fall significantly short of both targets. In ISER's study "Alaska's K-12 Capital Spending" report 3/21, the 2020 building replacement value is $9.4 billion. According to DEED's 3% recommendations, the CIP should be funded at $282 million, while the governor vetoed funding to $13 million in 2025. Inadequate and inconsistent capital funding has led to a growing backlog of maintenance and replacement needs, disproportionately affecting rural districts and those with limited local bonding capacity. In some cases, decades-old requests for essential repairs have gone unaddressed, resulting in serious facility failures, including school closures.

The current CIP process, while structured to assess need and prioritize projects, remains underfunded and inequitable. Districts with greater access to local capital and technical support are more likely to succeed in navigating the complex application process. Meanwhile, rural and under-resourced districts face systemic barriers in accessing capital funds.

Capital school construction is the second-largest category of state and local government capital investment nationwide, second only to road construction. In Alaska, failure to invest adequately in this area exacerbates inequities in educational opportunity and burdens communities least able to shoulder infrastructure costs. Without significant and sustained funding increases, Alaska's school facilities will continue to deteriorate, impacting student learning, staff retention, and overall safety.

Adopted 2024
Amended 2025
(*Sunsets 2030)*

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~~ **Community Assistance Program.**

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
Renewed 2019, 2024
(Sunsets 2029)

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. Regional boarding school programs expand access to educational opportunities for secondary students across Alaska, particularly those in small and remote communities where local options may be limited.

cdDistrict-operated boarding programs include both traditional residential schools, where students live on campus for the full academic year, and regional variable-term programs that provide short-term or intermittent residential opportunities aligned to specific academic, career and technical education, or dual credit offerings. Both models play an important role in expanding student access and supporting diverse learning pathways. Variable-term programs frequently involve inter-district cooperation and partnerships that expand opportunities and support student success.

While statute provides for a boarding school stipend, the per pupil monthly rates have remained unchanged since FY2015 and have not kept pace with the actual cost of providing housing, meals, and student support services. Ensuring adequate and predictable funding is essential to sustaining and expanding these innovative district programs.

Adopted 1996
Amended 1997, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2013, 2014
Renewed 2016, 2021
(Sunsets 2026)

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
Renewed 2017, 2022
(Sunsets 2027)

2.17 INSURANCE COSTS

AASB strongly urges the Alaska State Legislature to thoroughly investigate**,** evaluate, and report on 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 in pooling arrangements and other funding 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.

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, 2016, 2019
(Sunsets 2029)

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, acting in good faith, 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, 2016
Renewed 2018, 2023
(Sunsets 2028)

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. AASB expects the State of Alaska to 100% fund the constitutional obligation for both TRS and PERS.

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.

Adopted 2003
Amended 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2019, 2023
Renewed 2024
(Sunsets 2029)

2.20 ENERGY COST RELIEF

AASB urges the Alaska State Legislature to take action to mitigate 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 2019
Renewed 2024
(Sunsets 2029)

2.21 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
Renewed 2016, 2021
(Sunsets 2026)

2.22 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.

Rationale. 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
Renewed 2016, 2021
(Sunsets 2026)

2.23 ENSURING EQUITABLE INTERNET ACCESS FOR ALL

AASB urges the Alaska Legislature and Federal Government to provide equitable internet access to all students and staff by:

a. Funding high-speed internet connectivity for rural and urban schools.
b. Supporting infrastructure development through public-private partnerships and state-wide consortiums.
c. Ensuring all classrooms have affordable, adequate, and equitable broadband access to the national and international information infrastructure.
d. Encouraging state leadership to ensure all classrooms have affordable, adequate, and equitable broadband access.
e. Implementing appropriations or matching grants for instructional technology.
f. Urging Congress to fully fund the E-rate program or a robust educational technology substitute.
g. Assisting schools in improving internet connectivity through new E-Rate subsidies.

Rationale. Alaskan students are living in a digital age. 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 of, 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.

Adopted 2024
(Sunsets 2029)

2.24 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
Renewed 2017, 2022
(Sunsets 2027)

2.25 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. Alaska's science standards and assessment requirements, along with national expectations under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESSA), underscore the need for strong K–12 instruction in science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics. Students learn science most effectively through hands-on investigation, problem-solving, and active engagement in the practices of science and engineering. Likewise, the arts—particularly music, visual arts, and design—play a critical role in developing the creativity, cognitive flexibility, and spatial reasoning needed for success in technical fields. High-quality STEAM instruction requires well-trained educators who have access to sustained professional development and classrooms equipped with appropriate materials, technology, and consumable supplies.

However, many districts struggle to meet these needs. Rising operational costs, aging facilities, and long-deferred curriculum updates limit schools' ability to purchase science equipment, maintain labs, and provide meaningful experiential learning opportunities. Investing strategically in STEAM education, through targeted grants or a dedicated funding source, will strengthen Alaska's workforce, support innovation, and expand opportunities for all students. Excellence in these fields is vital to Alaska's long-term economic health and to ensuring that young people are prepared for the future.

Adopted 2008
Amended 2010, 2012, 2014, 2015
Renewed 2018, 2023
(Sunsets 2028)

2.26 URGING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A FUNDING POOL TO HELP FUND TRAVEL FOR STUDENTS TO ATTEND STATE AND/OR NATIONAL -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 and/or national -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 and/or national-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 and/or national-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, 2025
Renewed 2019, 2024
(Sunsets 2030)

2.27 URGING THE CONTINUATION OF FUNDING FOR CAREER AND TECHNICAL (VOCATIONAL) EDUCATION

AASB supports increased funding of Career and Technical (Vocational) Education through the foundation formula in AS 14.17.420 and 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, 2017, 2018
Renewed 2019, 2024
(Sunsets 2029)

2.28 SUPPORTING STATE FUNDING FOR SCHOOL MEALS

AASB supports an adequate financial appropriation from the State and Federal Government to strengthen and expand the National School Lunch and Breakfast Program in Alaska and other local programs to be sure that a culturally-relevant and genuinely nutritional school breakfast programs and a sustainable lunch may be available to all children at all schools throughout the state. AASB further calls for the Alaska Congressional Delegation to seek higher USDA school lunch reimbursements, commensurate with inflation. Such funding must be accomplished without diverting funds that belong in the educational foundation formula. Federal program requirements should be flexible enough to allow for alternative delivery mechanisms.

Rationale. No child should go without breakfast or lunch. Adequate nutrition is essential for supporting students' cognitive development, physical health, and ability to learn.

According to the USDA's Household Food Security in the United States 2023 report, approximately 17% of Alaska children experience food insecurity, with higher rates in rural and remote regions of the state.

School meal programs are a proven tool for addressing this need. The National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs reduce food insecurity and help ensure students are ready to learn.

In Alaska schools, more than 40 percent of public school students are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals. However, delivering high-quality schoolSt meals remains a challenge, particularly in areas of the state where food costs, supply chain limitations, and transportation barriers drive up the cost of providing meals. Federal meal reimbursements do not adequately account for Alaska's uniquely high food costs, forcing districts to subsidize programs or limit participation.

Additionally, not all schools currently offer school breakfast programs, leaving gaps in service for some of the most vulnerable children. Expanding access to breakfast programs, and ensuring that both breakfast and lunch meet students' nutritional and cultural needs, requires adequate and sustainable funding support from both state and federal sources.

AASB supports state and federal investments to strengthen Alaska's school meal programs, to pursue higher USDA reimbursement rates reflective of Alaska's actual costs, and to ensure that no student is denied the nourishment necessary to succeed in school.

Adopted 2010
Amended 2015, 2018, 2023
Renewed 2015, 2020, 2025
(Sunsets 2030)

2.29 FOCUS ON GRADE-LEVEL PROFICIENCY FOR PRE-K TO GRADE TWELVE STUDENTS AND ADDRESS THE NEED FOR REMEDIATION

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

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

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."

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 2014, 2018
Renewed 2016, 2023
(Sunsets 2028)

2.30 COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE ENERGY PLAN

AASB urges the Alaska State Legislature to work with the State Congressional Delegation and stakeholders to develop and fund updated energy efficient systems based on need and implement a comprehensive statewide energy plan that includes current energy sources, conservation of energy and development of alternative energy. The plan should address and fund 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 benefiting school districts and ultimately benefiting 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 Alaska 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, 2018, 2024
Renewed 2017, 2022
(Sunsets 2027)

2.31 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 (AS 14.09.010) 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 AS 14.09.010 was amended.

Adopted 2013
Amended 2015
Renewed 2018, 2023
(Sunsets 2028*)*

2.32 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 and timely 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: a salary and benefits schedule for school districts, teacher tenure reform, statewide prototype school design and construction public education funding. The studies were completed in 2016 in the midst of a severe budget deficit and laid fallow. Stakeholder input was inconsistent and limited. Transparency of study designs and practices was not as forthright as many stakeholders and districts had hoped. Such studies, if used for the basis of statutory or budget changes, need to reflect the variety of unique needs and costs for each school as many rural districts have varying costs in hub or out-lying villages. Best practice is not always the cheapest practice to fund.

Adopted 2014
Amended 2016
Renewed 2019, 2024
(Sunsets 2029)

2.33 SUPPORTING THE USE OF FEDERAL IMPACT AID BY AFFECTED DISTRICTS

AASB supports allowing affected districts to utilize all of the Federal Impact Aid which 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.

AASB urges that impact aid not be reduced based on title ambiguity that exists in rural households.

AASB urges the state to address the effects of withholding Impact Aid, including the disparity test.

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.

For one district 20 million dollars of the awarded impact aids fund had to be given to the State over a ten year period due to the state's auditing process of determining which households are eligible.

Adopted 2014
Amended 2025
Renewed 2019, 2024
(Sunsets 2030)

2.34 FUNDING FOR INTERNET SERVICES

AASB urges the Alaska Legislature and Federal Government to enact and fully fund equitable internet services for rural schools and to extend those benefits to urban school districts as well, to support increasing infrastructure for internet access to rural and underserved communities through more efficient e-rate access for remote learning, public-private partnerships, state-wide consortiums, etc., ensuring that all students and staff have access to reasonably priced, high speed high bandwidth connectivity. Digital literacy is a fundamental skill in the 21st century**.** Equitable internet access will allow all students to develop this skill.

Rationale. Access to high-speed, reliable internet is essential for delivering equitable education across Alaska. Many rural and remote school districts continue to face significant challenges due to limited broadband connectivity, hindering students' access to digital learning resources, online assessments, and virtual instruction.

In 2014, the Alaska Legislature enacted House Bill 278, which aimed to provide funding to eligible schools to achieve internet speeds of up to 10 megabits per second (Mbps). However, this initiative did not receive full funding, and urban schools were excluded from the state-provided internet benefits.

Recognizing the urgent need for higher internet speeds, the Legislature passed House Bill 193 in March 2024, allocating up to $39.4 million in state aid to match federal E-Rate funds. This legislation enables schools to upgrade their internet service to speeds of up to 100 Mbps, aligning with the Federal Communications Commission's updated broadband standards. AASB thanks the Alaska Legislature for this legislation.

Despite these significant advancements, available funding does not cover all eligible schools. In addition many students in rural Alaska also do not have affordable internet access in their homes, limiting educational access for homework and home-based support.

Adopted 2014
Amended 2019, Renewed 2024, (Sunsets 2029)

2.35 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. Funding should include students through 21 years old**.**

Rationale. A high school diploma remains a foundational credential that opens doors to higher education, career pathways, military service, and economic self-sufficiency. Students who leave school without a diploma often face barriers to employment, limited access to postsecondary education and training programs, and reduced lifetime earnings. This, in turn, affects not only individual well-being but also the broader economic and civic health of Alaska's communities.

School districts are encouraged to identify and support overage and returning students in completing the credits and coursework needed to earn a diploma. Doing so requires a commitment of resources - academic advising, flexible scheduling, alternative education options, and wraparound services - and the return on investment is substantial. By investing in programs and supports that help returning students earn a diploma, Alaska can increase workforce readiness, reduce dependency on public assistance, and build stronger, more resilient communities.

Adopted 2014
Amended 2015, 2019
Renewed 2024
(Sunsets 2029)

2.36 URGING THE ALASKA LEGISLATURE TO ADDRESS INEQUITIES IN SCHOOL FUNDING

AASB urges the Alaska Legislature to address and fund inequities in school funding identified in the July 2015 report to the Legislative Budget & Audit Committee and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) September 30, 2024 memo from the Finance Division to the Legislative Budget & Audit Committee.

Rationale. A 2015 report to the Legislative Budget & Audit Committee, "Review of Alaska's School Funding Program" (Augenblick, Palaich & Associates), identified a number of structural inequities in Alaska's K-12 funding system and provided recommendations to better align funding with student need. The report recommended that Alaska's foundation formula provide additional targeted support for low-income students, English language learners, Alaska Native students, and students in small and remote schools to help ensure their academic progress and equitable access to educational opportunities. The recommendations in the 2015 report remain highly relevant today, as addressing these inequities remains a critical need. AASB urges the Legislature to act on

these recommendations and ensure that Alaska's public school funding system is fair, responsive, and aligned with student needs statewide.

Adopted 2015
Amended 2018, 2025
Renewed 2020, 2025
(Sunsets 2030)

2.37 RESOURCES TO EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENT THE ALASKA SAFE CHILDREN'S ACT

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

Rationale. School Board members recognize the importance of providing staff training to staff and student education to prevent child sexual abuse, promote healthy relationships, and protect children from harm The Alaska Safe Children's Act (AS 14.30), which includes provisions commonly known as Erin's Law and Bree's Law, requires all school districts to deliver specific training to staff and students on these important topics. While the Act reflects strong public policy goals, its requirements impose substantial implementation costs on districts, with no dedicated state funding provided. Districts must cover the expenses of developing or purchasing curriculum, training all certificated and classified staff on child sexual abuse prevention and dating violence prevention, and ensuring compliance with ongoing annual training mandates. The cumulative impact of these, and numerous other, unfunded mandates strains district budgets.

A clear plan is needed to examine the full costs of implementing the Safe Children's Act requirements, and to provide sustainable state funding and flexibility to help districts meet these obligations.

Adopted 2015
Amended 2023
Renewed 2020, 2025
(Sunsets 2030)

2.38 LOCAL CONTROL OF SCHOOL FUNDING

AASB urges the Alaska 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. Under current law (AS 14.03.260(a)), local school boards are required to allocate an annual program budget to each charter school based on the full amount of funding that would be generated for those students if they were enrolled in other public

schools in the district. This includes state funds, federal funds, and municipal funds, including the required local contribution. The required local contribution is intended to support public education broadly, with local school boards determining how best to serve the needs of all students in their districts, and not to serve as a mandated funding stream tied to student enrollment in individual schools.

Municipal contributions should remain under the authority of locally elected school boards, who are best positioned to understand and respond to the diverse needs of their communities. AASB urges the Legislature to amend AS 14.03.260(a) to clarify that state pass-through mandates for charter school funding do not apply to municipal appropriations for education, including the required local contribution.

Adopted 2015
Renewed 2020, 2025
(Sunsets 2030)

2.39 INCREASING THE FUND BALANCE CAP FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS

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

Rationale. Fund balances play a critical role in promoting financial stability, managing cash flow, and helping Alaska school districts respond to enrollment fluctuations, funding volatility, and unforeseen expenses. However, Alaska law (AS 14.17.505) limits school district unreserved general fund balances to 10 percent of annual operating expenditures. The 10 percent limit penalizes districts that achieve budget savings or efficiencies. Any amount beyond the cap is subject to reduction in future state funding calculations, which can undermine incentives for conservative budgeting and lead to unproductive year-end spending.

In 2021, in response to the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic and the influx of federal relief funds, the Alaska Legislature enacted a temporary moratorium on the fund balance cap through HB 76. That moratorium expired on June 30, 2025.

Experience during the moratorium has shown that a more flexible fund balance policy is both practical and fiscally responsible. AASB urges the Legislature to amend AS 14.17.505(a) to permanently raise the fund balance cap to 15 percent or higher, providing school districts with the flexibility they need to operate responsibly and sustainably under modern fiscal conditions.

Adopted 2015
Amended 2020, 2025
(Sunsets 2030)

2.40 INFLATION-PROOFED BASE STUDENT ALLOCATION (BSA) INVESTMENTS

AASB urges the State of Alaska to make inflation-proofed incremental investments to the BSA.

Rationale. When state support does not keep pace with rising operational costs, districts are compelled to reduce programs, eliminate positions, defer maintenance, and limit student opportunities simply to balance their budgets. As a result, the real purchasing power of the Base Student Allocation has steadily eroded, creating structural challenges for districts statewide.

Incremental, inflation-adjusted investments to the Base Student Allocation, combined with a multi-year glide path to restore the BSA's lost purchasing power, would provide school districts with stability, predictability, and the capacity to plan responsibly for the future. A long-term approach to the BSA will help ensure that every Alaska student has access to a strong educational foundation and that districts can meet the state's academic standards without recurring budget crises.

Adopted 2018
Renewed 2023
(Sunsets 2028)

2.41 FULLY FUNDING THE REAA RURAL CONSTRUCTION FUND AND BOND DEBT REIMBURSEMENT

AASB supports fully funding the REAA Rural Construction Fund and Bond Debt Reimbursement.

Rationale. The State of Alaska is responsible for providing an adequate education for all Alaska-children and thus is responsible to fully fund the REAA Rural Construction and Bond Debt Reimbursement Fund in order to provide safe facilities to educate all Alaska students. A proactive approach to funding capital project applications will result in future major maintenance costs in the future of facilities and infrastructure that has passed its design life.

Adopted 2019
Renewed 2024
(Sunsets 2029)

2.42 SUPPORT THE UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA SYSTEM

AASB supports increased and adequate funding of the University of Alaska.

Rationale. The rationale for this resolution is to support adequate funding for the University of Alaska system. The University of Alaska system works collaboratively with K-12 education systems to offer dual credit opportunities; develops partnerships such as ANSEP; and prepares the future workforce of Alaska. The University of Alaska system also supports and conducts research on issues important to Alaskans.

Adopted 2019
Renewed 2024
(Sunsets 2029)

2.43 URGING THE STATE TO FUND AS 14.14.115, THE COOPERATIVE ARRANGEMENT GRANT PROGRAM TO EMPOWER DISTRICTS TO FIND GREATER EFFICIENCIES

AASB urges the state to recognize, encourage, and empower districts to do the necessary work to combine efforts and share resources for greater efficiency and effectiveness.

Rationale. There are great models of collaborative work between districts across the state. These efforts require extensive work and cooperation between school boards and district personnel. There is already a statute in place for this purpose but it has not been funded, and requests for support under 14.14.115 have been denied. A proper appropriation of funds for this purpose will encourage and increase these efforts between districts.

Adopted 2019
Renewed 2024
(Sunsets 2029)

2.44 URGING DEDICATED FUNDING OUTSIDE THE FOUNDATION FUNDING FORMULA

AASB requests the Alaska Legislature to establish dedicated funding outside the Foundation Funding Formula for the express purpose of supporting school districts in hiring health professionals, including school nurses, counselors, social services managers, and mental health professionals, to support the health and well-being of Alaska's students.

Rationale. The credentialed school nurse, or credentialed mental health professional with specialized medical background, academic preparation and professional skill, is especially qualified to strengthen the educational process through improvement of the health status of students and to develop and provide leadership for the school’s comprehensive health program; and

Chronic illnesses among children in Alaska have been increasing and obesity has been identified as a major health concern in our state and nation, and the incidence among children has been increasing at a rapid rate; and virtually all of Alaska's public schools have students with asthma, those with the need for emergency injections for severe allergies or migraine headaches, and those with children who need blood glucose monitoring and/or insulin injections at school, in addition to other health-related concerns.

Under Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, students with disabilities have the right to receive a free appropriate public education, which includes reasonable accommodations required for the management of chronic medical conditions, of which numerous children in public school classrooms in Alaska have that require special nursing procedures or monitoring; and

In Alaska, the student to credentialed school nurse ratio far exceeds the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommendation of 750:1 in regular student populations and 100:1 in special needs student populations; and

The Alaska Department of Health cites that school nurses support student success by providing health promotion, disease prevention and management, health care assessment, intervention, and follow-up for all children within the school setting; and Department of Health Statistics indicate that mental health of Alaska students is declining as evidenced as evidenced by high rates of depression, anxiety, substance use, and suicide. A credentialed mental health professional is uniquely qualified to support Alaskan students in addressing mental health needs and improving resiliency and thus academic success. School attendance is linked to academic success and graduation rates, and a higher nurse to student ratio is associated with better attendance rates; and students with a full-time school nurse have about half the student illness- or injury-related early releases as students from a school where no school nurse is present.

Adopted 2020
Amended 2023, 2024
(Sunsets 2029)

2.45 TEACHER EDUCATION LOAN EXPANSION

~~To amend Alaska State Statute A.S. 14.43.700 to retroactively include hub communities that are a gateway to other eligible rural communities, regardless of population, allowing educators in the area to be eligible for the Teacher Education Loan (TEL) Program.~~

AASB supports the continuation and re-funding of ~~the~~ a teacher education loan program that bolsters high demand, high needs positions. ~~Further, AASB believes that the definition of rural not be contingent on population if that community is not connected by rail or road.~~

Rationale. In order for a teacher to be eligible for the TEL Program's loan forgiveness they must agree to return to "rural" Alaska to teach for 4 years. AS 14.43.700 states, in relevant part, that "rural means a community with a population of 5,500 or less that is not connected by road or rail to Anchorage or Fairbanks." According to the 2010 Federal Census, Bethel's population is 6080. Therefore, Bethel does not technically meet the definition for a rural community in Alaska; and with increasing population trends, other regional hub communities do risk similar case despite the following facts:

- Hiring of local individuals to teach in local schools has long been a goal of rural school districts. LKSD has a future teacher candidate scholarship that, if coupled with the TEL Program, provides funding to enable local individuals to obtain education degrees and return to our region to teach.
- Teacher retention has been difficult all over the U.S. but has been a critical issue for all rural Alaska. In Bethel teacher retention has been particularly problematic. Funding, such as the TEL Program, would be extremely helpful in encouraging teachers to return home to the Bethel area.
- The population guidelines related to this statute have not been changed since its inception. Yet, according to the definition that applies to Medical Education Support (AS 14.43.510(i)) the definition for rural is the same as the TEL Program except the population restriction is set at a more reasonable 7,500.
- Bethel, like all other rural hub communities, is not connected to any other community by way of a conventional road. All travel and/or supplies must be by completed plane or barge. Because of this the cost of living in Bethel is quite high. Bethel is clearly a rural community.

Adopted 2021
(Sunsets 2026)

2.46 FUNDING FOR SKILL PROFICIENCY AND CREDIT RECOVERY RELATED TO PANDEMIC DISRUPTIONS

AASB requests that the Alaska State Legislature increase the Base Student Allocation by 20% for school years impacted by a pandemic to fund skill proficiency building and credit recovery for students in grades K-12. These funds shall be used for extended-day learning or summer intensive programs aimed at increasing proficiency in Reading or Math; or credit recovery in any subject required for a student to meet State of Alaska Graduation requirements.

Rationale. Disruptions caused by a pandemic will cause many Alaska children to fall behind and struggle to catch up in reading and math proficiency; but also, in credits needed to graduate. Districts need additional resources to assist these students in meeting standards and staying on-track for graduation. This request will allow districts to rely on stable funding to cope with the extra labor and programmatic demands needed to teach these students in extended learning and summer school programs outside the regular school offerings over the next 4 academic years following a pandemic.

Adopted 2021
Amended 2023, 2024
(Sunsets 2029)

2.47 SUPPORT FOR THE ADOPTION OF LEGISLATION FOR STATE-FUNDED VOLUNTARY EARLY CHILDHOOD (PRE-K) EDUCATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS

AASB urges the State of Alaska to transform public education by passing legislation that ensures funding for high quality, accessible, and voluntary pre-K public education. A high-quality public education is guided by learning standards; balances performance expectations across age-appropriate developmental domains; implements and monitors effective teaching and learning practices; and supports the professional development of highly qualified, sustainable staffing.

Rationale. School readiness starts in pre-Kindergarten aged students. The necessity of preparing children for school is never more important than now, and sustainable funding is necessary.

Respected research shows the importance of high-quality pre-K experiences for young children's cognitive, language, and social emotional development. Alaska's reading scores on state assessments are below students' abilities and expected outcomes. Pre-Kindergarten is proven to support language development and reading readiness, along with overall academic performance over time. Children who experienced high quality pre-K programs perform well throughout their school careers and further in life.

Scientific studies repeatedly show that effective early childhood education and support services benefit all groups of children and bring significant value to groups that could otherwise not afford it, thus improving equity in education for all. Additionally, early childhood education is of great value to all children and should be available to all on a voluntary basis because it provides a sound foundation for Kindergarten readiness and helps to develop skills, knowledge, personal competence, confidence, and a sense of social responsibility.

Furthermore, early education (pre-k) programming is a non-partisan policy proven to be one of the soundest educational investments the public can make, providing demonstrated, significant, long-term savings in the costs of special education, grade retention, welfare, and crime. When a community reaches high levels of educational attainment, it becomes a community that is less vulnerable to poverty, unemployment, and crime.

The reduced need for public spending on remedial education, criminal justice, and social support programs, in addition to citizens that are active and productive members of their

communities, are key reasons why including pre-K funding within the K-12 system is a necessary investment in our children, our communities, and our state.

Adopted 2021
(Sunsets 2026)

2.48 URGING THE ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE TO ESTABLISH A COMPREHENSIVE ENERGY PROGRAM FOR ALASKA'S SCHOOLS

AASB urges the Alaska Legislature to take action to alleviate the significant energy costs faced by all school districts. To achieve this, we recommend a comprehensive program that addresses energy conservation, alternative energy development, and deferred maintenance of public facilities and buildings. This program should be based on actual energy costs and provide relief to schools across the state.

For context, the Power Cost Equalization (PCE) Program was established in 1985 to reduce electric rates for rural consumers to levels comparable to those in urban areas. The program provides a subsidy to rural electric utilities, which pass the savings on to residents and municipal entities in the form of discounted electric bills. Today, the PCE program serves 82,000 Alaskans in 193 communities, largely reliant on diesel fuel for power generation.

The AASB believes a similar program can be designed to support Alaska's schools, ensuring a dependable and sustainable energy solution for the foreseeable future.

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 the 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.

The Power Cost Equalization (PCE) program was created through an understanding between rural and urban lawmakers when the Alaska Legislature agreed to fund the large dam projects to offset energy cost for the urban areas. PCE is the rural equivalent of the large dam projects since large dam projects were improbable in rural Alaska. The PCE program provides equitable support for affordable energy and reduces the electric rates paid by rural consumers to levels comparable to consumers in urban areas that benefit from the large dam projects. High electric costs increase all other costs due to the "trickle-down" effect. PCE helps families provide adequate settings to prepare students for learning.

Adopted 2024
(Sunsets 2029)

2.49 ESTABLISHING A DEDICATED STATE FUND FOR ROUTINE AND PREVENTIVE SCHOOL MAINTENANCE SEPARATE FROM THE BSA EDUCATION FUNDING FORMULA

The Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB) urges the Alaska Legislature to establish a dedicated, annually funded appropriation for routine and preventive school maintenance—distinct from the Base Student Allocation (BSA)—to ensure all districts can maintain safe, healthy, and operational school facilities without diverting resources from instruction.

Rationale. AASB supports the creation of a separate maintenance fund to provide consistent resources for the routine upkeep of school facilities. Chronic underfunding has forced many districts—particularly in rural and remote areas—to defer essential maintenance in favor of preserving classroom services. This has led to deteriorating buildings, increased emergency repair costs, and growing health and safety risks. A dedicated fund will prevent further decline, reduce long-term costs, and ensure all students have access to safe, well-maintained learning environments.

Adopted 2025
(Sunsets 2030)

2.50 REQUESTING THE STATE OF ALASKA REVISE THE SCORING OF CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS TO PRIORITIZE LIFE AND SAFETY ISSUES FOR ALL DISTRICTS AND ESTABLISH A SEPARATE FUNDING LIST FOR REAA SCHOOL DISTRICTS

The Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB) urges the State of Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) to revise the Capital Improvement Project (CIP) scoring system to ensure that projects addressing critical life, health, and safety concerns receive the highest priority for funding.

AASB supports the inclusion of the following improvements to the CIP process:

1. Prioritization of projects that directly address urgent life, health, and safety issues within school facilities.

2. Incorporation of the number of years a project has remained unfunded as a scoring factor, giving additional weight to long-delayed projects.

3. Establishment of a separate funding list for Regional Educational Attendance Area (REAA) districts to ensure equitable consideration for districts without local

government funding support.

Rationale. The current State of Alaska Department of Education and Early Development Capital Improvement Project (CIP) scoring system does not adequately prioritize projects that address critical life, health, and safety issues within school facilities. Numerous school facility projects across the state have remained unfunded for multiple years, leading to worsening conditions and compounding risks for students and staff.

REAA school districts do not have a local tax base or municipal government to help share in the costs of capital facility projects and major maintenance. The State of Alaska therefore carries the responsibility to ensure that facilities in REAA districts are safe, functional, and conducive to learning. Revising the CIP scoring system to give greater weight to life, health, and safety priorities and to long-delayed projects would strengthen the state's ability to meet its obligation to provide equitable and safe learning environments for all Alaska students.

Adopted 2025
(Sunsets 2030)

2.51 ADDRESS THE EMERGENCY CIP FUNDING FOR ALL ALASKA SCHOOLS

AASB supports the establishment of emergency response and interim funding mechanisms within the Capital Improvement Project (CIP) program to ensure that imminent life-safety hazards in Alaska's schools can be resolved without delay.

Rationale. School districts in Alaska face serious, unresolved life-safety facility deficiencies that cannot be addressed in a timely manner through the existing Capital Improvement Project (CIP) process. Critical systems such as fire suppression, alarms, and structural safety components may remain unfunded for many years despite being identified as high-priority needs. For example, the Southeast Island School District has operated the Thorne Bay School gymnasium with a failed fire suppression system for an extended period. Despite submitting this project through the State of Alaska's CIP program for seventeen consecutive years, funding has not been approved.

While interim mitigation plans may reduce immediate risk, they do not provide permanent solutions and can leave students and staff vulnerable. Establishing an emergency response and interim funding mechanism within the CIP program would allow the State to act quickly when imminent life-safety hazards are identified, ensuring safe learning environments for students across Alaska.

Adopted 2025
(Sunsets 2030)

2.52 EDUCATION PAYROLL HEAD TAX

The AASB lends its full support to the establishment of an annual education head tax. An education head tax will provide a secure source of funding for public elementary and secondary education.

Rationale. The funding of public education in Alaska is subject to an annual appropriation from the state's general fund and is contingent upon available state revenues. State revenue is primarily derived from two sources: oil revenues and investment returns from the Permanent Fund. Both funding sources can vary wildly from year to year, providing little stability for education funding. Education funding is also subject to the changing funding priorities of administrations and legislatures. Funding for education has increasingly failed to provide a stable and secure source of funding for Alaskan students. A yearly education head tax will provide a secure funding source for public education funding and allow for long-range education planning. The education tax alone will not solve the issue of funding education, but it could serve as a solid foundation and as a part of a larger fiscal solution for the State of Alaska.

Adopted 2025
(Sunsets 2030)

2.53 BACKUP POWER FOR SCHOOL DISTRICT OWNED HOUSING

AASB supports funding for backup power **and lighting, including emergency beacons,** for school district owned housing.

Rationale. School teachers play a critical role in supporting students and communities during emergencies, often serving as first responders and providing stability in times of crises. Many schools serve as critical shelters during disasters, requiring teachers to remain on-site to assist with emergency operations and provide care for displaced community members. Teacher housing often lacks reliable backup power sources leaving educators vulnerable during power outages caused by natural disasters or other emergencies; and the absence of backup generators in teacher housing compromises the ability of educators to perform their duties effectively and safely during emergencies, and ensuring reliable power in teacher housing is essential to maintaining the well-being of educators and their ability to support students and communities during crises.

Adopted 2025
(Sunsets 2030)

2.54 REQUESTING FUNDING FOR CONSTRUCTION OF FULL-SIZE GYMNASIUMS IN ALL SCHOOLS IN CONSIDERATION OF COMMUNITY SAFETY NEEDS

AASB supports addressing public safety needs for full-size gymnasiums in schools. Public schools serve as critical emergency shelters during disasters, providing essential space for entire communities when no other facilities can accommodate them.
Gymnasiums are included as instructional spaces in the overall footprint and design of schools. The current funding formula for school construction results in gymnasiums being smaller than full regulation sizes; smaller gymnasiums place communities at risk during disasters when schools are forced to serve as emergency shelters; and there is a compelling public safety need for schools serving as critical shelters to have full-size gymnasiums.

Rationale. AASB recognizes the critical role of schools as community shelters during disasters and supports the inclusion of full-size gymnasiums in the design and funding of new school facilities to ensure adequate shelter space for public safety; and supports that the state funding formula for design and square footage that is used to determine funding is changed to reflect the changes stated above.

Adopted 2025
(Sunsets 2030)

2.56 REQUEST THE LEGISLATURE FULLY FUND MANDATED EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

The Association of Alaska School Boards urges the Alaska Legislature to provide funding and resources to effectively implement any mandate that requires students to learn any specific topic **or reach any benchmark.** AASB further urges the Alaska Legislature to expand fiscal notes to include costs for school districts to fully implement mandated educational requirements.

Rationale. School Board members recognize the importance of ensuring students have a wide range of learning opportunities. There have been many examples of unfunded mandates that have been legislated. Alaska school districts face the additional costs of teacher training, additional costs for materials and for staffing to accomplish the mandate. Small school districts may not have the resources to meet the mandate requirement. Examples include the Alaska Reads act and HB27 requiring all students receive training in CPR.

2.57 REQUEST THE LEGISLATURE EVALUATE THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON STUDENTS

The Association of Alaska School Boards urges the Alaska Legislature to ~~fully~~ study **within one year,** the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on students. ~~and provide~~ ~~**including**~~ **Financial** resources **should be provided** to school districts to bring ~~them back up~~ **impacted students** to grade level.

Rationale. School Districts across Alaska have noted learning loss in students both who were enrolled in and subsequently enrolled in schools after the COVID-19 pandemic. It is not known how the pandemic impacted learning and districts are inadequately funded to respond to this learning loss.

2.58 URGING EQUITABLE FUNDING FOR INTERSCHOLASTIC ACTIVITY TRAVEL

AASB recognizes that participation in interscholastic activities is an important component of a well-rounded education. Due to Alaska's geography, the financial burden of providing these opportunities is not equitable among school districts. ~~Under Alaska School Activities Association (ASAA) requirements, certain off-road-system districts, including the North Slope Borough School District, Juneau School District, and Kodiak Island Borough School District, are required to provide or assist with travel costs for visiting teams participating in interscholastic competition. These requirements create additional costs that are not imposed equally on all Alaska school districts.~~

AASB urges ASAA, the Alaska Legislature, and the Governor to establish an equitable funding mechanism for interscholastic activity travel so that individual school districts are not required to bear a disproportionate share of the cost of providing statewide competition because of their geographic location.

Rationale. Alaska school districts face significantly different costs to provide students with opportunities to participate in interscholastic activities. Districts that rely on air or marine transportation already incur substantial costs to send their own students to competitions.

In addition, ASAA requirements place certain travel responsibilities on the North Slope Borough School District, Juneau School District, and Kodiak Island Borough School District for visiting teams participating in activities such as football, basketball, volleyball, and wrestling. This can require these districts to fund travel for their own

teams while also contributing toward the cost of bringing opposing teams into their communities.

These requirements help ensure that students in geographically isolated communities have opportunities to compete. However, the cost of providing those opportunities should not fall disproportionately on a small number of school districts.

An equitable statewide funding mechanism should recognize the costs associated with Alaska's geography and distribute the financial responsibility for interscholastic travel more fairly among districts. This would help ensure that students throughout Alaska have access to interscholastic activities regardless of where they live.

CHILD ADVOCACY

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 adopt and embed ~~s~~ocial and emotional programs and practices in their schools and programs.

AASB encourages educator programs, Alaska DEED, and the Alaska Legislature to fund social emotional and trauma engaged training for school staff.

Rationale. There is a significant amount of research on the impact of social and emotional programs. Research 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. Social emotional programs contribute to staff retention and "workplace ready" skills for students.

Adopted 1997
Amended 1998, 2002, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2024
Renewed 2017, 2022
(Sunsets 2027)

3.3 FETAL ALCOHOL AND DRUG EXPOSED STUDENTS

AASB recognizes the impact of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and strongly recommends 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 diagnose this disease. Not all children with FASD meet the criteria for Special Education 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.

Adopted 1997
Amended 1998, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2018
Renewed 2017, 2023
(Sunsets 2028)

3.4 SUPPORTING SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT

AASB urges the Alaska Legislature to take the following actions to address substance abuse:

- Enforce laws related to controlled substances.
- Fund community-based and residential treatment programs for children, young people, and their families.
- Regulate marijuana use to prevent negative impacts on Alaska youth.
- Allocate tax revenue from marijuana sales to support education, prevention, and treatment programs.
- Increasing funding for opiate abuse treatment.
- Providing resources for medication-assisted treatment and substance use disorder counseling in community settings, including schools.

AASB also asks the Alaska Legislature to join in urging Congress to fund the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act to support education, counseling, and prevention efforts

Rationale. Drug-related problems, including opiate use, inhalants, alcohol, tobacco, methamphetamines and other drug abuse, are a major debilitating influence on the lives of the youth of Alaska. The abuse and prevalence of opioids has created a statewide emergency declared by Governor Walker in 2017. These addictions have been proven to be the primary contributing factor in the alarming number of dropouts, fatal overdoses 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.

The current requirement by the state that substance abuse treatment programs be "evidenced-based" is often challenging for indigenous populations, as the content is often not relevant or culturally appropriate. Numerous studies have shown that culturally relevant programs are more effective and have more positive outcomes for participants.

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.

According to the most recent data from the Alaska Youth Risk Behavior Survey (2019), 15 percent of students in a traditional high school setting used prescription opiates in a way not prescribed by their doctor with 5.7 percent reporting that they had done so in the last 30 days. The numbers from non-traditional high schools are much higher, with 32.7 percent of students admitting the use of prescription opiates in a way not prescribed by their doctor and 13.7 percent in the past 30 days (2019).

AASB recognizes the positive steps the Alaska Legislature has taken to combat opioid overdoses and regulate the dispensing of opioid medication prescriptions. AASB advocates for legislative funding for opiate treatment options for 1) Students experiencing addiction and 2) Students who are being impacted by those who have an addiction. In many Alaska communities, treatment options are limited by professional expertise and the expense of treatment. The American Academy of Pediatrics advocates for increasing resources to improve access to medication-assisted treatment of opioid-addicted adolescents and young adults. This recommendation includes both increasing resources for medication-assisted treatment within primary care and access to developmentally appropriate substance use disorder counseling in community settings.

AASB calls on member districts to take into account the highly addictive nature of these drugs in implementing discipline and intervention programs and to recognize the need for a collaborative, multi agency approach to get a student in crisis the help they need.

Adopted 2024
(Sunsets 2029)

3.5 EDUCATION ON THE DANGERS OF TOBACCO, ELECTRONIC NICOTINE DELIVERY SYSTEMS, MARIJUANA USE AND SECONDHAND SMOKE

AASB encourages the Alaska Legislature to provide education awareness funding for publications and educational awareness opportunities on the danger of secondhand smoke in regards to tobacco, electronic nicotine delivery systems, and marijuana use.

Rationale. In a recent study performed by the University of California San Francisco, the conclusion was drawn that one minute of exposure to secondhand smoke (SHS) from marijuana diminishes blood vessel function to the same extent as tobacco, but the harmful cardiovascular effects last three times longer.

The researchers (July 27, 2016, issue of the *Journal of the American Heart Association,)* found that rats exposed to marijuana SHS experienced a more than 50 percent reduction in FMD (flow-mediated dilation,) similar to the reduction in artery function seen in both rats and humans exposed to tobacco smoke in previous studies. As with tobacco, the reduction occurred after just one minute of exposure to SHS from marijuana. However, while rats exposed for one minute to tobacco SHS recover within 30 minutes – an observation that was reproduced in the new study – one minute of exposure to marijuana SHS (Secondhand Smoke) still significantly affected FMD 90 minutes after the initial exposure.

Studies have also demonstrated that exposure to tobacco smoke in childhood is associated with negative health consequences in childhood (including an increased risk for viral infection, asthma, cognitive deficits, and behavioral issues) and also with an increased risk of disease in adulthood.

Adopted 2017
Amended 2018, 2019
Renewed 2024
(Sunsets 2029)

3.6 VIOLENCE (AND PORNOGRAPHY) 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 parent/guardian 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.

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,
Amended 1998, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2007
Renewed 2017, 2022
(Sunsets 2027)

3.7 COOPERATION AMONG SERVICE PROVIDERS SERVING CHILDREN

AASB supports information sharing within Federal Rights to Privacy requirements (FERPA, HIPAA, 42 CFR). This facilitates the development of cooperative treatment plans that involve appropriate school personnel.

Rationale. Children receiving services from social service agencies are often experiencing significant disruptions in their lives, which can make it difficult for them to focus on learning and succeed in school. When multiple agencies are involved in providing services to a child, one agency may hold critical information that could improve or coordinate the services provided by another. In some cases, children may receive overlapping or even conflicting services due to a lack of communication among providers.

To meet the needs of these students, service delivery must be improved through a system that is collaborative, comprehensive, and centered on the child and family. Effective information sharing between school districts, Tribes, and social service agencies, within the boundaries of federal privacy laws (FERPA, HIPAA, 42 CFR), is essential to ensuring coordinated support and enabling children to come to school each day ready to learn.

Adopted 2000
Amended 2001, 2002, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2011, 2017, 2025
Renewed 2020, 2025
(Sunsets 2030)

3.8 SUICIDE PREVENTION, EDUCATION AND TREATMENT EFFORTS

AASB requests the State of Alaska to provide funding for statewide suicide prevention, education, and treatment efforts coordinated among various entities including peer helper programs, behavioral health centers, and local and state agencies. Initiatives should include a statewide program to bring professional behavioral health counselors on-site to visit schools as well as support school-based counseling programs.

Further, AASB urges school districts, tribal entities, and appropriate agencies and communities to engage in responding to this serious and ongoing challenge, through the implementation of protective factors, ensuring culturally relevant strategies. **AASB encourages support for student-led groups which provide positive mental health opportunities ~~support~~ and recognizes that positive, healthy activities promote connection as well as mental and emotional wellbeing.**

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.

The number one protective factor in preventing youth suicide in Alaska natives is to ensure that the person has a strong sense of who they are and that their identity is reflected in the systems with which they interact. A focus on ensuring that each child's school is a place where their cultural identity is affirmed and celebrated is an important step in lowering the suicide rate in Alaska Native youth.

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.

Adopted 1997, 2017
Amended 1998, 1999, 2002, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2010, 2015, 2019, 2023
Renewed 2024
(Sunsets 2029)

3.9 SAFE, CARING AND CONNECTED SCHOOLS

AASB recognizes the importance of positive school climate, building positive relationships**,** and student connectedness to school as powerful influences on student academic success and on reducing youth risk behaviors and urges the Alaska 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, bullying and intimidation in any form, violence, drugs (including alcohol and tobacco), and other factors that threaten the safety of students and staff while acknowledging that schools have not historically been safe for all students.

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.

Adopted 1997, 2017
Amended 1998, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2008, 2009, 2014, 2015, 2018
Renewed 2017, 2023
(Sunsets 2028)

3.10 SUPPORT OF STATE FUNDING FOR STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES IN ALASKA

AASB strongly urges the Administration and the Alaska 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.

Adopted 1998,
Amended *2002, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2011*
Renewed 2018, 2023
(Sunsets 2028)

3.11 HIV/AIDS AND OTHER SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STI) EDUCATION

AASB supports providing effective HIV/AIDS and other Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) 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 should 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 STIs.

Rationale. The impact of all Sexually Transmitted Infections 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 STIs, many of which are life-long. The instructions should not lull teens into careless and risky behavior.

Adopted 1997, 2017
Amended 1998, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2008, 2009, 2018
Renewed 2017, 2023
(Sunsets 2028)

3.12 EDUCATION OF STUDENTS IN RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIORS RELATING TO HEALTHY AND SAFE RELATIONSHIPS THROUGHOUT THE LIFESPAN

AASB encourages responsible behaviors relating to healthy and safe relationships throughout the lifespan, by supporting programs that promote abstinence, develop healthy decision-making skills, convey the importance of consent, teach refusal skills, promote prevention of pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

Rationale. The Youth Risk Behavior Study of 2017 indicates a steady percentage of the number of students who reported that they had sexual intercourse at least once, approximately 37%. Since 2011 about 37 percent of high school students reported having had sexual intercourse. Overall, there has not been a continued decrease in early sexual activity nor the use of condoms to prevent sexually transmitted infections or pregnancies. This suggests a lack of effective education pertaining to responsible sexual behaviors.

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.

Young people often receive confusing and conflicting information about relationships and sex, as they make the transition from childhood to adulthood. This has led to an increasing demand from young people for reliable information, which prepares them for a safe, productive and fulfilling life. When delivered well, Sexual Education responds to this demand, empowering young people to make informed decisions about relationships and sexuality.

Adopted 1997
Amended 1998, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2023, 2025
Renewed 2017, 2022
(Sunsets 2030)

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 Alaska Legislature to support and increase the Children's Trust Endowment.

Rationale. The Alaska Children's Trust was established by the Alaska 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.

Adopted 1996
Amended 1997, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2015,
Renewed 2016, 2021
(Sunsets 2026)

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.

Adopted 1997, 2017
Amended 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2006, 2009, 2010
Renewed 2017, 2022
(Sunsets 2027)

3.15 SUPPORTING THE ADOPTION OF TRAUMA-INFORMED AND CULTURALLY AFFIRMING PRACTICES

AASB urges its member districts to educate families and the greater community on trauma-informed and culturally affirming practices. The Association of Alaska School Boards understands the importance of meeting the needs of students who have experienced childhood trauma to improve student achievement and reduce behavioral deficits for all Alaskan students.

Rationale. Research shows that six of ten Alaskan students have experienced at least one traumatic childhood event before graduating. These students require a supportive environment to heal and achieve academic and social success – supports that several other states and Alaskan districts have successfully implemented. These childhood traumas, if not properly addressed, can lead to heart disease, obesity, liver and kidney disease, depression, substance abuse, suicidality, early death and numerous other serious health concerns. When students are punished or shamed for behaviors that result from their exposure to trauma, this can lead to increased risk of dropping out of school and worse job prospects. Our schools have an opportunity to help students heal and grow after traumatic experiences, but only with modifications to the current school climates, practices, and policies. Additionally, actions and activities that may be necessary to help traumatized students will benefit all students socially, emotionally, and academically.

The Association of Alaska School Boards understands the importance of meeting the needs of students who have experienced childhood trauma. As Alaskans experience adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) at rates higher than the national average, and as there are racial disparities in ACEs and the negative outcomes of ACEs in Alaska, AASB urges its member districts to implement trauma-informed and culturally relevant practices, disciplinary policies, interactions and environments.

Adopted 2017
Renewed 2022, 2023
(Sunsets 2027)

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. State law (AS 14.03.110) requires affirmative parental permission for students to participate in certain questionnaires and surveys administered by school districts. While intended to ensure parental awareness and consent, these requirements can significantly limit student participation and reduce the usefulness of the data collected.

School districts rely on survey data to inform efforts related to student health, safety, school climate, and academic support. Low participation rates can make it difficult to accurately identify student needs and evaluate programs addressing issues such as bullying, substance use, and mental health.

Revising parental permission requirements to allow for more practical and effective data collection, while maintaining appropriate parent notification and transparency, would support schools in making informed decisions that improve student outcomes.

Adopted 2001,
Amended 2007, 2009, 2015
Renewed 2016, 2021
(Sunsets 2026)

3.17 STUDENT WELLNESS

Good physical and behavioral 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 including behavioral health. 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 obesity issues should include increased funding and support for traditional foods 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, 2018, 2020, 2023
(*Sunsets 2028)*

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 difficult 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. Educational success is strongly influenced by the quality of brain development that occurs from birth to age three. During this critical period, children's experiences shape the foundation for learning, behavior, and health throughout life.

To maximize children's learning potential, families must have access to age-appropriate, culturally relevant, and native language-supported resources that promote healthy brain development. Public and private agencies, including school districts, should collaborate to provide families with research-based information and effective tools to support this essential stage of development.

Investing wisely in early childhood yields significant long-term benefits for individuals and society. Conversely, failing to invest in early brain development can lead to persistent and costly educational challenges.

Adopted 2005
Amended 2011, 2013, 2015, 2023
Renewed 2020, 2025
(Sunsets 2030)

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, 2017
Amended 2009, 2011
Renewed 2017, 2022
(Sunsets 2027)

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 Alaska 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
Renewed 2017, 2022
(Sunsets 2027)

3.21 EXPANSION OF HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE

AASB endorses the expansion of health insurance coverage to school-age Alaska children and their families. The provision of medical benefits to these children and their families ensures more students will be able to remain healthy, focus on school and grow into productive adults.

Rationale. The federal Affordable Care Act authorized states to expand Medicaid to target lower-income families with the promise of federal funding to underwrite much of the extra expense. The State of Alaska joined many other states in taking advantage of this expanded program in 2016.

Adopted 2010
Amended 2011, 2016, 2019, 2024
(Sunsets 2029)

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
Renewed 2017, 2022
(Sunsets 2027)

3.23 SUPPORT OF FULL STATE FUNDING FOR PUBLIC HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

AASB strongly urges the Administration and the Alaska 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

Adopted 2012
Amended 2013
Renewed 2017, 2022
(Sunsets 2027)

3.24 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.

AASB also supports the prohibition of students being exempted from this education by parents/guardians, except under exceptional circumstances.

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, 2018
Renewed 2019, 2024
(Sunsets 2029)

3.25 PROMOTING STUDENT TRANSPORTATION SAFETY PROGRAMS

AASB recognizes that our children are "Alaska's Most Valuable Resource." Accidental and preventable deaths caused by unsafe transportation practices have been plaguing the state, especially in rural school districts. AASB urges local school districts to adopt Student Transportation Safety Standards such as, but not limited to:

- Helmet use on ATV or snowmachines
- Lifejacket use on boats
- Appropriate use of seat belts and car seats
- Weather appropriate clothing for all modes of transportation
- Student choice to travel, or not, depending on weather circumstances

School districts should also consider safe travel practices and the adoption of standards for students traveling by any mode of transportation, to or from school activities.

Rationale. AASB's core resolutions currently address tobacco use, drug use, FAS, online porn and violence, HIV, sexual abuse, and suicide prevention. Addressing helmet and life jacket use, along with ground and air travel safety measures, would seem to coincide with these topics above, taking it one step further in protecting our students.

Adopted 2017
Amended 2018, 2023
(Sunsets 2028)

3.26 SAFE AND INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS FOR LGBTQ+ STUDENTS

AASB encourages member districts, state agencies, and other decision-makers to support policies and practices that ensure safe and inclusive learning environments for LGBTQ+ students. AASB supports districts in their efforts to protect the health and dignity of all children and youth, including transgender and nonbinary students, and to ensure equal access to educational programs.

Rationale. AASB recognizes the criticality of positive school climate on student academic success and has long held that every child deserves to go to school excited to learn in a safe and nurturing environment, without fear of bullying, violence, or discrimination.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning (LGBTQ+) students are more likely than their peers to be bullied, physically assaulted and feel unsafe in school because of their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. In addition, LGBTQ+ students report higher rates of isolation, depression, and suicidal ideations or attempts than their peers.

Harassment and bullying policies that specifically enumerate sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression have been shown to be associated with decreased incidents of harassment relating to sexual orientation, increased reporting of students feeling safe at school, and increased teacher/staff intervention in harassment. AASB encourages member districts, agencies, community partners, and all decision-makers to develop and enact policies and practices that protect the health, safety, and dignity of LGBTQ+ students.

Adopted 2021
(Sunsets 2026)

3.27 ADDRESSING AND PREVENTING HUMAN AND SEX TRAFFICKING

AASB believes every student has the right to grow up away from the fear of Human and Sex Trafficking. AASB is in support of bringing awareness, education, policy, and legislation forward regarding this topic. AASB encourages the Alaska Legislature to fund the development and implementation of a statewide human and sex trafficking prevention program to train and educate staff and students in our schools. Such a program should provide for awareness and education, service referrals and safe environments for victims of human and sex trafficking.

Rationale. Statistics show that the criminal enterprise of human and sex trafficking is real within the State of Alaska. Addressing and preventing human and sex trafficking requires the collective efforts of trained individuals who are internally and externally working with the school system. Prevention of human and sex trafficking starts with training and awareness of the warning signs and identification of behaviors of at-risk minors.

Legal Definition:

The Act of recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.

According to the Governor's Council on Human and Sex Trafficking (CHST) dated September 13, 2022, Key Priority #2 specifically addresses the need for Alaskan Educators to know the risk factors and warning signs associated with trafficking.

A 2017 study done at the Tanana Chiefs Conference states "1 in 4 females at Anchorage's covenant house had been trafficked for sex, and of those youth- 42% were Alaska Native."

Adopted 2023
(Sunsets 2028)

3.29 POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

AASB encourages each neighborhood, faith community, civic organization, community, school district, tribal entity, and state agency to review research in order to advocate, create, and sustain programs that build positive youth leadership. These include programs that elevate student voice and contributions, advance social emotional skills, build assets, and a strong identity.

Positive role models and caring adults are important for youth development. As funding, resources, and training are limited, AASB urges the State of Alaska and the US Congress to fund, offer training, and support these critical programs.

AASB encourages educator preparation programs to incorporate youth leadership training into their programs. Youth leadership efforts require staffing, resources, and funding.

Rationale. Positive Youth Development (PYD) is based on the belief that, given guidance and support from caring adults, all youth can grow up healthy and happy, making positive contributions to their families, schools, and communities. The approach favors youth leadership and skill-building opportunities, such as school and community improvement projects, school climate data walk, student panel, youth serving on school boards, and youth practicing cultural enriching values and activities. Research shows that effective schools, families, faith communities, and all adults in our communities can contribute to the positive development of youth.

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. Another important asset for our youth is having the leadership skills, abilities and opportunities to use their voice to provide input on decisions impacting them. We know that this benefits students and communities, leads to better engaged boards and decisions, and more engagement overall. To build up these assets, both youth and adults need access to training and skill building opportunities on positive youth development, on trauma engaged schools, on ways to support student voices and create safe spaces.
Adopted 2024
(Sunsets 2029)

3.30 ~~UNIVERSAL~~ DYSLEXIA SCREENING AND EARLY LITERACY INTERVENTION

AASB urges the Alaska Legislature and the Department of Education and Early Development to ~~require and~~ fund ~~universal~~ screening for dyslexia and other reading difficulties for all students in kindergarten through grade 2, using evidence-based screening instruments approved by the ~~state~~ **school district**. AASB urges that screening results trigger timely, structured literacy intervention for identified students, along with clear parent notification when a student shows characteristics of dyslexia. AASB further urges the state to fund training for ~~classroom teachers and~~ reading specialists, **psychologists or other designated professional staff** in evidence-based, structured literacy instruction, recognizing that screening alone does not improve outcomes without staff prepared to act on the results.

Rationale. Reading difficulties, including dyslexia, are most effectively addressed when identified early, yet without a universal, state-supported screening requirement, identification can vary widely from district to district and even school to school. Structured literacy approaches — grounded in explicit, systematic instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, and language structure — have a strong evidence base for supporting students with dyslexia and benefit struggling readers generally. Screening without follow-through is not sufficient: districts need funded intervention time, trained staff, and materials to act on what screening identifies, particularly in small and rural districts where a reading specialist may not be available in every building. This resolution builds on AASB's existing support for the Alaska Reads Act (2.6) by addressing the identification and instructional piece that complements that funding.

3.31 ABSENTEEISM

AASB urges the Alaska Legislature and the Department of Education and Early Development to support school districts in implementing tiered, non-punitive intervention systems for chronically absent students, including early identification, family engagement, and coordination with community, **tribal,** and social service partners. AASB further urges the state to provide dedicated funding for attendance support staff, data systems capable of flagging at-risk students in a timely manner, and professional development for staff on root causes of chronic absence. AASB opposes approaches that rely primarily on punitive or exclusionary discipline, such as expulsion, as a response to absenteeism.

Rationale. Recognizing and measuring chronic absenteeism, as addressed in Resolution 1.9, is only the first step; districts also need the resources and systems to act on that data

before students fall behind. Effective practice nationally has shifted toward tiered support models — universal prevention for all students, targeted outreach for students showing early signs of disengagement, and intensive, individualized support for students who are already chronically absent — paired with attendance review teams that bring together educators, counselors, and families to identify and address underlying causes such as health, housing, transportation, or mental health barriers. Given Alaska's rural geography, weather-related disruptions, and the distances many students travel to attend school, districts need both flexibility and dedicated resources to build these systems rather than a one-size-fits-all state mandate.

3.32 SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

AASB urges the Alaska Legislature and the Department of Education and Early Development to provide dedicated funding and technical support to help districts meet their obligations to identify, enroll, and support students experiencing homelessness, including students living in shelters, temporary housing, motels, **or otherwise defined in the McKinney-Vento homeless assistance act.** ~~**living in over crowded homes** doubled up with other families~~. AASB urges the state to ensure districts have adequate resources for school-of-origin transportation, immediate enrollment without normally required records, and coordination between district homeless liaisons and community, housing, **tribal organizations,** and social service agencies. AASB further urges the state to recognize the particular challenges rural and boarding-school districts face in identifying and supporting students facing housing instability, given the added complexity of coordinating support across long distances and multiple communities.

Rationale. Federal law already requires districts to remove barriers to enrollment and to provide stability and support for students experiencing homelessness, but districts often lack the staffing and funding to fully meet these obligations, particularly in identifying students whose housing situation is not immediately visible to school staff. Housing instability is strongly linked to chronic absenteeism, lower academic achievement, and higher mobility between schools, compounding the very disruptions these students most need help to overcome. Alaska's rural geography, high cost of housing, and reliance on boarding programs create added layers of complexity not faced by every state, making a well-supported, locally coordinated liaison system especially important here.

3.33 SCHOOL THREAT ASSESSMENT AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

AASB urges the Alaska Legislature and the Department of Education and Early Development to provide dedicated funding, training, and technical assistance to help districts establish and maintain these teams, conduct regular multi-agency emergency drills, and keep building-level emergency response plans current. AASB further urges that any state requirements in this area account for the added logistical and financial burden on small and rural districts, where dedicated counseling, mental health, and law enforcement resources are often limited or unavailable locally.

Rationale. Threat assessment — identifying and intervening with a student of concern before an incident occurs — is increasingly recognized as a more effective and less disruptive approach to school safety than physical security measures alone. Districts need both trained personnel and a defined process to evaluate concerning behavior consistently, coordinate with families and outside agencies, and document decisions in a way that protects student rights, including for students with IEPs or 504 plans. Given Alaska's geography, many districts cannot rely on nearby law enforcement or mental health providers to staff a team the way an urban district might, making state-level funding and regional coordination support essential rather than optional.

PERSONNEL

4.1 SUPPORTS FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT

AASB supports funded opportunities and allocation of 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 and other school staff to implement the Alaska State Standards, ~~including~~ ~~**local**~~ **and** Cultural Standards;
- Professional development for teachers and other school staff to implement the Alaska Reads Act;
- ~~Professional development for teachers and other school staff to actively engage **all** families in their children's education;~~
- **Professional development for teachers and other school staff to actively engage all families in meeting all students educational needs**.
- Professional development for teachers and other school staff to develop and implement culturally responsive classroom practices, curriculum and pedagogies;
- Pre-service: State training programs through postsecondary and other institutions;
- 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 **(**Every Student Succeeds Act 2015) 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 education personnel.
- Promote local mentors to foster cultural enrichment and awareness for teachers/administrators.
- Cultural orientation and ongoing training in local language, culture and history.

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 and school staff 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.

Explicitly listing the need for both orientation and continued professional development in the areas of culture, language, and history will help districts focus on this key need for success. Teachers who understand the culture of the area in which they serve feel more connected to their students and community, provide more appropriate and culturally responsive instruction, and tend to remain in their teaching assignments longer.

Adopted 2002
Amended 2004, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2018, 2019, 2023, 2024, 2025
(Sunsets 2030)

4.2 ESTABLISHING A ~~NEW~~ TEACHER INCENTIVE PROGRAM FOR ALASKA

AASB requests that the Alaska State Legislature establish and fund a ~~New~~ Teacher Incentive Program for the purpose of **encouraging,** attracting and retaining ~~new~~ teachers to Alaska school districts. A sample incentive program could include the following:

1. The requirement that a participant be a graduate from an approved teacher certification program meeting the requirements of initial certification for the State of Alaska; or
2. Meet the requirements of 14.20.022 (Subject-matter expert limited teacher certificate) and be currently enrolled in a Teacher Certification Program of no less than 12 credit hours per year directly related to the graduation requirements for a Teaching degree, certificate, or endorsement qualifying the person for a Professional Teacher Certificate or Second Initial Teacher Certificate; and
3. Have all eligible Federal student loans consolidated with a loan program that qualifies for Teacher Loan Forgiveness (FFEL) as long as that program or any substantively similar program exists; and
4. The student must make minimum payments as required to maintain eligibility for Teacher Loan Forgiveness (FFEL); shall be provided
5. A one-time relocation bonus to ~~the new~~ **a** teacher and his/her family of $10,000 to the district in which they are hired; and
6. A student loan forgiveness payment of the lesser of 10% or $15,000 directly to their student loan servicer upon completion of each of their first five years of teaching in the same district; and
7. Provide a student loan forgiveness payment directly to the loan servicer of the lesser of 10% or $10,000 directly to their student loan servicer upon completion of each of their sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, and 10th years teaching in Alaska, and
8. Payoff all remaining student loans, public or private, not to exceed $25,000 total, after the eleventh year teaching in Alaska and after the employee provides evidence that they have applied for Teacher Loan Forgiveness and met all application requirements; and

9. Providing a retention bonus of $3,000 per year, through year 10, for any qualified teacher not receiving a student loan forgiveness payment in the program; and
10. Fund the program as a state Grant through DEED for $10 million per year ($150 million total over 15 years) with preference for State of Alaska Residents, graduates from Alaska Colleges and Universities, and members of Alaskan Federally-Recognized Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations.
11. **Teachers who stay in a school district for more than 3 years should receive a cash bonus.**

Rationale. In 2020, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported, unadjusted to cost-of-living, that Alaska was #9 in median teacher pay (Elementary Teachers, excluding Special Education). For Comparison, California was #1, Washington State was #10, and Oregon was #12 (https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes252021.htm#st). Secondary teacher pay was substantively similar.

Alaska has always had challenges recruiting and retaining teachers. But as other states catch-up to and pass Alaska, it will be even harder. Alaska will likely see the impacts first in the REAA and other rural communities who have always experienced teacher shortages. The recruitment and retention of students needs to be addressed before we reach a point of crisis as Alaska teachers retire with an inadequate pipeline of new teachers to replace them.

In 2021, 83% of students had student loans and the average student loan debt at graduation was $36,140. This historic high represents an opportunity for Alaska to capture students who want to teach, are attracted to Alaska, and have a troubling amount of debt to pay-off. Additionally, by linking the first 5-years of teaching to a rural district, the benefits are targeted to benefit the rural districts first. This will enhance the ability of rural districts to recruit and retain new teachers longer, develop teachers more culturally aware and experienced with Native Alaskan cultures and communities, and eventually help all Alaska districts recruit and retain experienced Alaskan teachers.

This program also has reasonable cost controls. With the average student loan debt of $36,140, this program will be a loan payoff acceleration program rather than loan forgiveness program. This is because the program requires participants to enroll in a qualified Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program and maintain minimum required payments to the lender. Therefore, these payments are in addition to student payment and not replacing student payments. This will also allow more new teachers to participate in the program over the next 15 years. However, it will also attract and retain students with extraordinary student loan debt that would have otherwise left the profession for higher potential earnings.

Finally, this program is built to give preference to REAA Teachers, Alaska Residents, Alaska college graduates, and Alaska Natives. These preferences helps those districts

most at risk of recruiting and retaining new teachers but also focuses on groups most likely to remain in Alaska for their entire career. This should maximize the effectiveness of overall teacher retention in the state of Alaska.

Adopted 2021
Amended 2025
(Sunsets 2030)

4.3 ALASKA STATEWIDE EDUCATOR MENTORING

AASB applauds the willingness of veteran educators to serve as mentors to Alaska's teachers, administrators, and paraprofessionals. AASB urges the Alaska Legislature to provide adequate and permanent funding to continue professional staff mentoring and to increase the number of mentors based on the district size and location. Mentors should also be trained to support new teachers to address implementation of the Alaska Cultural Standards, which are critical in ensuring our State's diverse population of students have access to culturally relevant instruction.

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. A focus on developing culturally competent teachers will ensure teachers in rural districts develop strong relationships with their students and communities, reducing feelings of isolation, burnout and discouragement.

These points are taken from the Educators Rising Standards published by the National Education Association.

- "The imperative to cultivate a new generation of diverse, skilled practitioners is at the root of all hopes for a more equitable and competitive future for our country. Research has long indicated that, among school factors, nothing influences student achievement more than the effectiveness of one's teacher." (ERS Introduction)

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, 2018, 2020, 2024
Renewed 2023
(Sunsets 2028)

4.4 SPECIAL EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES TRAINING

The Association of Alaska School Boards promotes the funding, establishment and expansion of postsecondary educational programs to train additional individuals as certified and classified special education staff and the initiation of programs to train related services providers (e.g. 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, 2023
Renewed 2018
(Sunsets 2028)

4.5 ADDRESSING THE TEACHER, ADMINISTRATOR, AND SCHOOL STAFF 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, administrators, and school staff in the State of Alaska. Suggested strategies may include:

- Increasing the Base Student Allocation and ensuring that it keeps up with inflation so that school districts can offer competitive salary and benefit packages to retain and recruit administrators, teachers, and school staff;
- Incentives (salary bonuses, student loan forgiveness, student loan assumption, competitive retirement benefits, student loan 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 technology including bandwidth and knowledgeable staff;
- Increasing availability and/or quality of teacher housing, including state subsidized teacher housing
- Mentoring programs for student teachers, new teachers, administrators, and school staff, including Type-M certified teachers;
- Streamline the rehire of retired teachers administrators, and school staff
- Professional support/development;
- Eliminate redundant or unnecessary paperwork.
- Increasing awareness about the lives and communities of Alaska's children.
- A defined benefit retirement system
- Utilize research on system supports that promote teacher retention.
- Train more Alaska students as educators; and
- Seek training opportunities for staff and high school students to increase the pool of qualified staff who are representative of the diverse population they teach.

Rationale. School districts across every region of Alaska are facing a severe and ongoing shortage of teachers, administrators, and support staff. This shortage poses a significant barrier to improving educational outcomes for Alaska's students and threatens the stability and effectiveness of public education statewide.

Attracting and retaining qualified educators requires a comprehensive approach that addresses both professional and personal factors. Job satisfaction is influenced by many factors, including a sense of purpose, access to professional support, competitive

compensation and benefits, and adequate living conditions. The extent to which Alaska meets these needs reflects the value our state places on its educators.

Addressing this crisis will require coordinated action and sustained investment in strategies that support recruitment, retention, and workforce development.

Adopted 1999
Amended 2000, 2001, 2005, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2023
Renewed 2020, 2025
(Sunsets 2030)

4.7 RELATING TO DEFINED BENEFIT RETIREMENT

AASB supports re-establishment of a defined benefit retirement program that improves the hiring and retention 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, 2016, 2019, 2023
Renewed 2024
(Sunsets 2029)

4.8 RELATING TO HEALTH CARE COSTS AND MEDICAL INSURANCE

AASB calls upon the Governor, the Alaska Legislature and Congress to assist school districts to address the cost of health care ~~i~~n Alaska in ways that are not detrimental to districts while providing district options.

Rationale. In Alaska, more than approximately 96,000 residents have no medical insurance, and the price of treatment is increasing. In the U.S. 44 million people have no health insurance. The uninsured drive costs up for everyone. For school districts in Alaska 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 a districts' ability to directly impact student achievement through classroom focused expenditures.

Adopted 2005
Amended 2010, 201, 2013, 2018, 2021
Renewed 2023
(Sunsets 2028)

4.9 SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE, CULTURALLY--INTEGRATED PEDAGOGY IN ALASKA

AASB urges the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) to support and provide regionally implemented immersive cultural training and programs through: a) Alaska Studies and Cross-Cultural Communication professional development courses, b) the development of local mentor programs for teacher enculturation, and c) consultation with tribal governments and Alaska Native entities. Furthermore, AASB urges DEED to provide for the development of regionally and locally relevant elementary and secondary curriculum, which includes Alaska's history from the Alaska Native perspective. Furthermore, AASB urges DEED to redefine Alaska Studies and Cross-Cultural Communication/Multicultural Education teacher certification requirements to specifically include Alaska Native peoples and cultures. AASB also urges the University of Alaska College of Education (COE) to support local teacher preparation programs that grow our own teachers as well as supporting regional campuses in offering regionally-relevant Alaska Studies and Cross-Cultural Communication courses.

Rationale. AASB recognizes the fact that Alaska's public schools need to provide an equitable and relevant education to all students that prioritizes social justice and advocacy. AASB recognizes the predictability of disparity in achievement based on race or ethnicity.

The first long-range goal (2015-2018) of AASB is to:

> "….empower boards to increase the academic success of Alaska Native students and increase graduation rates of Alaska Native students who are grounded in their cultural identity with the ability to successfully pursue their goals".

AASB strives to deliberately act to eliminate such gaps, policies, practices and structures that perpetuate inequities based on race and support the elimination of the factors that predict disparity. AASB recognizes that systemic changes in formal schooling need to occur in order for achievement to increase and recognizes the need for equitable delivery of education revolving around giving every student what he or she needs to achieve success (Bylaws Article 2, Section 6 and Policy 100).

AASB supports and encourages the creation of culturally responsive learning environments that support high expectations and academic achievement for learners from all racial groups. AASB supports funded opportunities and sufficient resources for quality and relevant staff including administrators (AASB 2017 Resolutions 4.1, 4.13). AASB currently collaborates with initiatives such as the Alaska Education Challenge, the newly-structured University of Alaska College of Education; the First Alaskans Institute Education Council, the Educators Rising Standards, and the Inuit Circumpolar Conference on Education in accomplishing equitable and relevant education in Alaska.

Adopted July 2017, Amended 2018, 2023

Renewed 2023, (Sunsets 2028)

4.10 ADDRESSING THE PARAPROFESSIONAL SHORTAGE

In light of the statewide shortage of paraprofessionals, the Association of Alaska School Boards encourages and urges the Alaska State Legislature and Board of Education to enact legislation and programs to fully fund the recruitment, retention, training, and development of paraprofessionals. Suggested strategies may include:

- Increasing the Base Student Allocation and ensuring that it keeps up with inflation so that school districts can offer competitive salary and benefit packages to retain and recruit paraprofessional
- Adequately fund career and technical education pathways at the secondary level to encourage and support students to pursue careers as paraprofessionals;
- Adequately fund continuing education for paraprofessionals
- Marketing programs aimed at retaining and recruiting paraprofessional talent;
- Development/Mentoring programs;
- Increased allocation for paraprofessionals in the funding model;
- Incentives, pay and assistance to support paraprofessionals to include alternative pathways as they become certified or type M teachers.

Rationale. Paraprofessionals, including education support staff, bring immeasurable value to the classroom. Students with disabilities and those who need additional instruction require extra attention in order to help them understand the lesson. Paraprofessionals help teachers save valuable class time by working with these students and helping them keep pace with their peers. Without the added help, these students will fall behind. Paraprofessionals also help teachers with other classroom tasks, as well as additional tasks throughout schools such as before/after school, recess, and lunch supervision.

A shortage of paraprofessionals is being experienced in every region of Alaska, but especially in rural and remote rural districts. Recruiting and retaining quality paraprofessionals is a critical issue facing school districts as they work to improve education in Alaska's public schools. Retaining paraprofessionals will depend on a number of factors, including a sense of importance, professional support, development opportunities, and adequate compensation/benefits. The degree to which Alaska meets these factors is a statement of the value we place on our paraprofessionals.

Adopted 2018
Renewed 2023
(Sunsets 2028)

4.11 ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS TO CERTIFY EFFECTIVE TEACHERS

AASB encourages the Department of Education & Early Development to develop alternative pathways for certifying teachers (a) to qualify vocational/career technology teachers to provide core academic credit; (b) to support pathways for non-certified school staff; (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 all students, and (d) to teach in and meet the distinct needs and priorities of State Tribal Education Compacting Schools. The alternative pathways should be created with participation from both urban and rural districts.

Rationale. With the passing and implementation of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the requirement for "highly qualified" teachers has been eliminated but the need for "highly effective" teachers remains. 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, it is critically important that districts and school systems be able to utilize effective instructors that may have come through alternative pathways of certification. Alaska faces a severe shortage of Native teachers and a dearth of culturally appropriate pathways to teacher certification for teachers of any ethnicity. 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/indigenous teachers to become certified.

Adopted 2008
Amended 2010, 2011, 2013, 2017, 2018, 2023
Renewed 2023
(Sunsets 2028)

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
Renewed 2015, 2020, 2025
(Sunsets 2030)

4.13 CONTINUE TO STRENGTHEN TRAINING REQUIREMENTS FOR SUPERINTENDENTS, CHIEF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS, SUPERINTENDENT/PRINCIPALS, OTHER DISTRICT AND SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

AASB urges the University of Alaska to continue to strengthen its curriculum and program for the education of school superintendents, chief school administrators, superintendent/principals, other district and school leadership 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 and effective communications, 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.
- Cultural awareness, knowledge, and understanding of Alaska Native cultures
- Awareness, knowledge, and understanding of other cultures
- Organizational Change Management Theory
- Equity, inclusiveness and cultural responsiveness;
- Emerging school issues such as artificial intelligence.

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
Amended 2018, 2019, 2023
(Sunsets 2028)

4.14 TEACHER CERTIFICATION DELAY

The AASB urges the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development to allow flexibility in teacher certification timelines, especially when the Department is behind in processing applicant paperwork.

Rationale. ~~Alaska School Districts are responsible for providing a local system of public education~~ **Districts are experiencing delays which means teachers are not in compliance with their contracts, board policies, and applicable State Statutes.** Alaska School Districts recognize the quality of the teacher in the classroom is the most important school-based factor in improving student achievement. Boards of education are facing a shortage of qualified teachers in many hard-to-staff subject areas. Delays in the teacher certification process at a state level result in undue hardship on districts and applicants.

Adopted 2023
(Sunsets 2028)

EDUCATION PROGRAMS

5.1 CAREER TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND 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 (i.e. career-exploration coordinator, transition specialist, job coach), insurance, and workman's compensation costs.

There are a large number of students in rural villages who 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.

Adopted 1998
Amended 1999, 2002, 2008, 2010, 2012
Renewed 2018, 2023
(Sunsets 2028)

5.2 CURRICULUM EXPANSION VIA DISTANCE DELIVERY

AASB urges the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development (DEED) and other entities to support, coordinate and encourage Alaska-sourced 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 equipment. AASB strongly supports the increased development of the state's Internet infrastructure to support distance delivery, thus providing equitable educational opportunities for all students.

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

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 DEED.

Expanding distance delivery could also help meet the needs of providing effective and experienced teachers and paraprofessionals.

Adopted 2000
Amended 2001, 2002, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2014, 2016, 2017
Renewed 2015, 2020, 2025
(Sunsets 2030)

5.3 ALASKA NATIVE INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

AASB supports state funding for staff development, training, language practices, and materials preparation to revitalize Alaska Native language use, learning, and instruction. 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 indigenous languages, including adequate funding for programs that can support Alaska Native Indigenous language instruction. AASB recognizes that in order for students to become proficient in indigenous languages, we must also encourage parent engagement in the language learning process.

Rationale. The heritage languages of the Indigenous Peoples of the United States have become endangered. In Alaska, there are more than 23 indigenous languages that are central to the cultural identity of Alaska Native Students and communities within Alaska.

Without funding support and substantial changes to our educational systems that embed healthy language, Alaska will lose nearly all of its Indigenous languages. The endangerment of languages was greatly impacted by our educational systems–our Alaskan schools hold a great responsibility to restore languages and the cultural heritage of Alaskans. Financial support from the government for the preservation and revitalization of Native languages would enable the development of resources, the staffing of positions, implementation of best practices in language learning, and the use of technology to revitalize languages. Learning English should not be at the expense of indigenous language programs. Funders and Alaska public schools can help ensure that Alaska Native languages are safe and strong. Educators and advocates can work closely with decision makers and entities advancing language revitalization to affirm the right to indigenous education in public education, commit to language use, language resources

and equity in our schools, and normalize the use of Alaska Native languages in educational spaces.

Adopted 1997
Amended 1998, 1999, 2004, 2008, 2010, 2018, 2021, 2024
Renewed 2017, 2022
(Sunsets 2027)

5.4 COMMUNITY SCHOOL PROGRAMS

AASB recommends that a new Community Schools Act be enacted 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.

Adopted 2000
Amended 2001, 2004, 2008,2009, 2019
Renewed 2024
(Sunsets 2029)

5.5 SUPPORTING SCHOOL CHOICE WITHIN LOCALLY GOVERNED PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEMS

AASB supports public school choice within locally governed school districts as a vital strategy for creating an equitable, high-quality educational landscape that serves the diverse needs of all students. Options such as public charter schools, public correspondence schools, Tribally Compacted Schools, magnet schools, academies, and postsecondary dual enrollment opportunities can significantly enhance the K-12 public education system, offering students and families the flexibility to choose the educational pathways that best align with their individual needs and aspirations.

AASB acknowledges and encourages school choice within locally governed public school districts, which can be an important option for fostering a dynamic, inclusive, and high-quality education system. It respects each student's individuality, supports community involvement in education, and ensures that all students have access to programs that best meet their needs and aspirations. By embracing a variety of educational models within the public school framework, school districts can create a more equitable and effective system that better prepares all students for success in an increasingly complex world.

AASB reaffirms its unwavering commitment to providing funds for all public school options, including student allotments, consistent with Article 7, Section 1 of the Alaska Constitution. This financial support is a testament to our dedication to ensuring that all students have access to quality education, regardless of their chosen educational pathway.

Rationale. First and foremost, public schools are open to all students, regardless of their socioeconomic background, ethnicity, or academic ability. This inclusiveness ensures that every child has access to quality education and the opportunity to thrive. By introducing various school choice options within the public school framework, we can better cater to each student's unique learning styles, interests, and goals. Whether a student excels in a traditional classroom setting, requires a more flexible online learning environment, or benefits from a specialized curriculum focused on the arts or sciences, the availability of diverse educational programs ensures that all students can find a learning environment in which they can succeed.

AASB recognizes the pivotal role of local governance in supporting and regulating school choice options. Locally governed school districts, with their intimate understanding of the needs and values of their communities, are best positioned to oversee the implementation of various educational programs, ensuring they meet high standards of quality and inclusivity. Local boards and administrators can adopt policies to reflect the unique characteristics and needs of their student populations, fostering a more responsive and accountable education system. This proximity to the community ensures that decisions are made with the student's best interests at heart and that any issues can be addressed swiftly and effectively.

School funding allocated through local school districts, including allotments for correspondence school students, must conform to Alaska's Constitution, Article 7, Section 1, which states:
"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."

Adopted 2024
(Sunsets 2029)

5.6 ENCOURAGING CIVIC EDUCATION IN SCHOOL DISTRICTS

AASB encourages member districts to develop well-articulated curriculum for civic education including municipal, tribal, state, federal and global structures in order to provide effective teaching strategies for civic instruction, including promoting meaningful student government opportunities and civic engagement at all levels.

Rationale. In HCR 6, the 25th 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." Again in the 29th Alaska Legislature, this same topic was the focus of a legislative task force. Both Legislative committee reports and recommendations note the critical significance of civics education as a basis for sustaining our democracy.

While some schools in Alaska have developed excellent civics education curriculum, the Alaska 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.

Adopted 2007
Amended 2008, 2009, 2010, 2016, 2020, 2025
Renewed 2017, 2022
(Sunsets 2030)

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 that are locally relevant and/or 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. Additionally, the number of districts with Indigenous language immersion classrooms is increasing.

Adopted 2007
Amended 2015, 2023
Renewed 2017, 2022
(Sunsets 2028)

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
Renewed 2018, 2023
(Sunsets 2028)

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 Alaska 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
Renewed 2018, 2023
(Sunsets 2028)

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, that aligns with individual districts' enrollment policies and/or deadlines.

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
Renewed 2018, 2023
(Sunsets 2028)

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 clear and timely information about ESEA and develop effective advocates.

Adopted 2008
Amended 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014
Renewed 2018, 2023
(Sunsets 2028)

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 of engaging families and communities. This will more effectively support student success and align school and community efforts to create safe, healthy, culturally responsive, and opportunity-rich environments.

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, 2016
Renewed 2019, 2024
(Sunsets 2029)

5.13 RELATING TO POSTSECONDARY CLASSES FOR SECONDARY STUDENTS

AASB believes that students who are enrolled in state-funded institutions offering dual credit college post-secondary and 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, 2021
Renewed 2019, 2024
(Sunsets 2029)

5.14 SUPPORT FOR LOCALLY AUTHORIZED PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS

AASB only supports and endorses public charter schools within school districts that are approved by the local school district board of education and subsequently governed by locally elected academic policy committees (APCs). AASB opposes any other independent authorizer of public charter schools. Public charter schools can play an important role in providing tailored educational programs that may enhance student success. These schools benefit from the support of local school districts, which offer a deep understanding of community needs and priorities. This alignment should foster a sense of ownership and accountability, ensuring ~~that~~ the schools meet state, federal, and local educational standards. Governance by locally elected academic policy committees allows for swift issue resolution and the implementation of changes that best serve the students, creating a responsive and dynamic learning environment.

Rationale. Support from local school districts is indispensable for these charter schools, as they provide essential resources, professional development, and guidance. This collaboration helps maintain high educational standards and operational efficiency, allowing charter schools to leverage shared resources and expertise. The partnership between local school districts and school board-authorized charter schools ensures the provision of effective public school options. This collaborative and community-focused approach fosters innovation within a supportive framework, leading to improved educational outcomes and student success. Through this synergy, these schools offer a robust, adaptable, and high-quality educational experience for all students.

Adopted 2024
(Sunsets 2029)

5.15 FUNDING TO COVER THE COST OF IMPLEMENTING ASSESSMENTS

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

Rationale. 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
Amended 2016, 2023
Renewed 2020, 2025
(Sunsets 2030)

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
Renewed 2017, 2022
(Sunsets 2027)

5.17 URGING THE ALASKA 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
Renewed 2017, 2022
(Sunsets 2027)

5.18 ADDRESSING ENGLISH LEARNER IDENTIFICATION OF INDIGENOUS STUDENTS

AASB requests that Alaska's federal delegation work with the U.S. Department of Education and, where necessary, Congress to identify and remove federal barriers that prevent states from adopting culturally and linguistically appropriate identification procedures for Indigenous students, while preserving services and protections for students who have demonstrated English-language development needs.

AASB requests that the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development review and strengthen its statewide English Learner identification and misidentification procedures for Alaska Native and American Indian students to ensure that the presence, use, study, or revitalization of an Indigenous language does not, without evidence that the language has significantly affected a student's English-language proficiency, result in unnecessary English Learner screening or identification.

AASB further requests that DEED establish a clear, uniform, and timely process by which a parent, school district, or receiving school district may request review and correction of an erroneous English Learner identification, including an identification made by a student's previous Alaska school district. Such process should specify the evidence to be considered, timelines for review, written notice of the determination to the family and district, correction of statewide student records when misidentification is found, and procedures necessary to prevent a corrected identification from following the student upon transfer.

AASB further requests that DEED provide statewide guidance and training distinguishing (1) a student who has been properly identified as an English Learner and must satisfy

statewide exit criteria from (2) a student who was erroneously identified and therefore requires correction of the original identification rather than ordinary reclassification or exit. Furthermore, AASB urges that the Language Observation Checklist (LOC-A) be required rather than optional in assessing and identifying students as English Learners.

~~AASB requests our federal delegation to study laws around English Learner identification with the goal of reducing the over classification of indigenous students who have some measure of an Indigenous language spoken in their home as English Learners which has the negative effect of reducing educational opportunity.~~

Rationale. The current process and screening often results in children participating in immersion preschool programs, or with parents who are dedicated to language revitalization/continuation within their homes being classified as English Learners, which may burden these children with unnecessary EL supports, programs and assessments.

Adopted 2023
(Sunsets 2028)

5.19 SUPPORTING AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENTS

AASB strongly supports districts 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-word 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 for 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
Renewed 2020, 2025
(Sunsets 2030)

5.20 SUPPORTING RANDOM OR WEIGHTED LOTTERIES FOR CHARTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

AASB urges the Alaska Legislature to authorize a change in statute regarding the charter school(s) lottery process, to allow use of either a random lottery or weighted lottery for low academically performing and/or low-income students, when approved by the local school board and/or Alaska Board of Education.

Rationale. State law (AS 14.03.265) requires charter schools to use a random lottery when applications exceed available space. While this approach promotes fairness and transparency, it may limit the ability of districts to ensure equitable access for students who may benefit most from specialized programs, including students from low-income backgrounds or those experiencing academic challenges.

School districts may seek to design charter programs that address the needs of specific student populations. However, the requirement for a strictly random lottery can constrain efforts to align enrollment practices with program goals and student needs.

Allowing the use of a weighted lottery, when approved by the local school board, would provide districts with additional flexibility to expand access and better serve underserved student populations, while maintaining appropriate oversight and transparency.

Adopted 2016
Renewed 2021
(Sunsets 2026)

5.21 SUPPORTING THE ALASKA PERFORMANCE SCHOLARSHIP (APS)

AASB urges support for the Alaska Performance Scholarship for our high school students.

Rationale. The Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS) has been effective in encouraging high school students to pursue more rigorous coursework in preparation for postsecondary education. Data from the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education indicates that APS recipients accumulate college credits at a faster rate and are significantly more likely to persist in their postsecondary studies compared to non-recipients. These outcomes demonstrate the value of APS in supporting student success and strengthening Alaska's future workforce.

APS also expands access to postsecondary education and training by providing direct financial support to eligible students, helping to reduce cost barriers and increase participation in both academic and career pathways. Continued support for APS helps promote academic achievement, improve college readiness, expand access to postsecondary opportunities, and increase completion rates for Alaska students.

Adopted 2016

Renewed 2021
(Sunsets 2026)

5.22 CREATING COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES AND STUDENTS TO NAVIGATE COLLEGE AND CAREER TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

AASB encourages the creation of comprehensive family and student-centered navigation supports and systems to help all students access college and career training opportunities that will help meet the State's current and future workforce needs and launch students into success after high school.

Rationale. Alaska's workforce needs are growing, but many recent high school graduates are not pursuing the postsecondary education needed to be prepared to fill job openings and important community roles. Research shows that helping students understand their motivation and passion can help youth prepare for and engage in the workforce.

Pilot programs in Alaska that provide personal navigation support with dedicated, well-trained, and supported career guides have demonstrated a significant increase in the percentage of high school graduates who pursued some type of degree, certification, or military training. Also, participants in these pilot programs in Alaska completed the FAFSA at rates that, if applied statewide, could grant Alaskan students access to an additional $15 million or more in federal aid each year.

Alaska's best opportunity to meet the workforce needs of tomorrow is to help Alaskan students connect with the postsecondary opportunities they need to be ready.

Adopted 2022
(Sunsets 2027)

5.23 SUPPORTING TRIBAL COMPACTING TO IMPROVE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT FOR ALL ALASKAN STUDENTS

AASB urges stakeholders to be innovative in their thinking and to support efforts to collaboratively change practices and address barriers to implement new ways of teaching and learning in culturally responsive and affirming ways. AASB strongly supports the State Tribal Education Compacting Tribal Partnerships grant program and the model being developed under this grant program and Senate Bill 34 by DEED, AFN, and its tribal government partners as a public education option for the students of Alaska. Furthermore, AASB strongly encourages the state to adopt changes to Title 14 of the Alaska Statutes to allow for tribal sovereignty and autonomy over State Tribal Education Compacting Schools and issues such as teacher and staff certification, curriculum and student assessment. AASB wishes to serve as a voice for school boards and a resource for

tribes and agencies as this process proceeds as requested. AASB recognizes, respects and honors the inherent sovereignty of Alaska's tribal governments, as defined by federal law.

Rationale. The current education system in Alaska does not serve all students equitably and many of our youth do not reach their full potential. AASB recognizes the federal government and State of Alaska acknowledges Tribes as sovereign government. As an ardent supporter of local control of public education, AASB recognizes and acknowledges that tribal compacting is a form of local control.

While local school boards and their districts will not be directly involved as an entity within the negotiated compact among the State of Alaska, the Federal Government, and a tribe, school boards must remain informed and aware of the process and results. AASB can keep member districts informed on compacting issues and provide comments when appropriate and requested. AASB has a long history and extensive experience with school system governance that could be useful. AASB also desires to become better educated about tribal governance systems and develop a clearer understanding of how it may serve tribal compacted schools in the future.

Only through collaboration, partnership, and the willingness to be innovative can we hope to transform education to serve all students. Innovation and transformative change will take effort and participation by all stakeholders, such as in the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development's "Alaska's Education Challenge." It will require all levels of policymakers and stakeholders (*Alaska State Legislature, Governor, Municipalities, Tribal entities, School Board members, Superintendent Association, NEA, education groups, families, and others*) working towards a clear, well-articulated goal of providing an excellent education for every child every day, to truly fulfill the expectations of our constitutionally mandated education system.

Adopted 2017
Renewed 2022
(Sunsets 2027)

5.24 RECOGNIZING THE VALUABLE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES THE ANNUAL ELDERS & YOUTH CONFERENCE AND AFN CONVENTION PROVIDES STUDENTS

The Association of Alaska School Board supports school boards recognizing the annual Elders & Youth Conference and the Alaska Federation of Native (AFN) Convention as valuable and educational opportunities for Alaska's youth, and students should be encouraged and supported to participate in these events.

Rationale. The First Alaskans Institute Elders & Youth Conference is the largest statewide convening of Alaska Native Elders and Youth, representing all Alaska Native culture and language groups. The purpose of the conference is to connect Elders and youth for cultural learning and knowledge transmission, to bring people together to form

and nurture statewide relationships, empower the voice of participants as leaders, and put forward solutions to challenges faced by the participants and their home communities in order to enhance, strengthen, and perpetuate the unique spirits and identities of Alaska Native peoples. When school districts penalize youth, who attend the annual Elders & Youth conference and AFN Convention by counting their participation against the student's maximum allowable absences, it hinders students' abilities to participate in these important conversations. Students should be encouraged, rather than discouraged, to participate in the Elders and Youth Conference and AFN Convention.

Adopted 2017,
Amended 2019
Renewed 2024
(Sunsets 2029)

5.25 EDUCATION OF GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS

AASB supports strong gifted and talented programs in the state's elementary and secondary schools. AASB recognizes that gifted and talented students comprise a subset of learners who need additional challenges and strategies for involvement in the classroom or risk underachievement. While the Department of Education and Early Development requires a district education program for gifted children to be in place for Alaska school districts, there is limited accountability and no funding allocated to ensure the success of the program. This constitutes an unfunded mandate on school districts.

Rationale. Alaska Administrative Code 4 AAC 52.800 mandates that each school district will administer an appropriate educational program for gifted children enrolled in its schools. The program must have a process to develop a student-learning plan for each identified gifted student. The student-learning plan is to incorporate the participation of teachers, parents and the student. These plans will by their nature require additional resources or time for their creation and execution. However, no consideration for the additional time, training or resources is calculated into district funding. This de-emphasis of the importance identifying and engaging gifted and talented students can mean that these programs are given a minimum amount of consideration and students who fall into this category continue to be at risk of classroom underachievement and dropout.

Adopted 2014,
Amended 2019
Renewed 2024
(Sunsets 2029)

5.26 REQUEST FOR AN ALASKA DEED GRADUATION SUCCESS PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS AGES 19-21

AASB strongly urges legislative action for Alaska Department of Education to take a systematic approach to dropout recovery by expanding the funding for one additional year to school districts serving eligible students, aged 19-21.

Rationale. It is the responsibility of the State of Alaska to provide for the education of its students in a manner that enables them to be college and career-ready upon graduation and the State of Alaska has one of the highest student dropout rates in the country. Alaska's high school dropouts face fewer prospects for employment, significantly lower earning potential, higher rates of incarceration, and are far more likely to rely on public assistance than high school graduates. Failure to fully educate the next generation of workers and leaders has substantial long-term consequences for our shared economic well-being. The State of Alaska needs a systemic approach to address dropout recovery and to re-engage students who have already left school. The State of Alaska needs to implement active dropout recovery efforts to include identification, outreach, support, and alternative pathways to graduation**.** Re-enrolling in a traditional high school is always an option, the majority of returning students now request alternative education high schools or programs allowing for individualization and flexible scheduling.

Adopted 2017
Renewed 2022
(Sunsets 2027)

5.27 IN SUPPORT OF ARTS EDUCATION

AASB supports a systemic, rigorous and funded arts education for all students. AASB urges member districts and education agencies to prioritize artistic literacy and implement sequential, standards-based arts curriculum, employ arts specialists and cultural arts specialists whenever possible, and provide professional development in arts disciplines and arts integration for educators. AASB encourages member districts and education agencies to leverage the expertise and resources of community partners in order to improve access, equity, cultural relevancy, and quality of arts education for all students.

Rationale. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) recognizes the arts in the definition of a "well-rounded and comprehensive education that all American students deserve," including arts disciplines as subject areas eligible for Title I funds and other federal resources administered by state and local education agencies. A robust arts education teaches youth the skills necessary to succeed in life including problem-solving, creative thinking, self-discipline, and public speaking. The US Department of Education's ten-year review of Arts in Education-funded programs finds that "students in arts programming had better attendance, fewer disciplinary issues, and improved on-task behavior relative to comparison students,"(1) and data from the College Board showed that in 2015, students who took four years of arts and music classes while in high school

scored an average of 92 points higher on their SATs than students who took only one-half year or less (2).

The Alaska State Board of Education adopted the Alaska Arts Standards in 2016, which were followed by grade-level performance standards developed by Alaskan educators in Music, Visual Arts, Dance, Theatre, and Media Arts. Importantly, school districts around Alaska are pioneering creative and collaborative approaches to arts integration as a teaching strategy, culturally relevant arts teaching practices, and arts learning for educators. Arts teaching and learning strategies that integrate local and regional artistic traditions and Alaska Native cultural practices can positively impact student achievement. These state initiatives for arts education development and implementation are critical to efforts to better meet the needs of Alaska students.

1) U.S. Department of Education. (2012). Progress and Promise: Ten Years of the Arts Education Model Development and Dissemination Program. (p. 13)
2) The College Board. 2015 College-Bound Seniors: Total Group Profile Report.

Adopted 2018
Amended 2023, 2024
(Sunsets 2029)

5.28 SUPPORTING THE PRESERVATION AND RESTORATION OF ALASKA NATIVE INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

In recognition of the linguistic emergency for spoken or critically endangered Alaska Native Indigenous languages declared on September 23, 2018 in Administrative Order No. 300, AASB urges support from the Alaska Legislature, the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development and all accredited higher education systems.

AASB urges the Alaska Legislature to support local school districts in their efforts to create Alaska Native language immersion or bilingual education. AASB also urges the Alaska Legislature, DEED, and school districts to integrate Alaska Native Indigenous languages across all age levels. This requires additional, targeted funding allocations. This funding will support the development of curriculum, as well as the training, certification and hiring of qualified, fluent Alaska Native Indigenous language educators.

AASB urges the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development to review its policies regarding requirements to provide support and encouragement to Alaska Indigenous Natives to seek Type M Certificates, and form community partnerships in the developmental process for Type M Portable certification in Alaska Native Indigenous languages.

AASB encourages all accredited higher education systems to reinvigorate and expand its programs in all Alaska Native Indigenous languages. These programs are instrumental in the preservation of our state's indigenous languages.

Rationale. Alaska Native Indigenous languages have become critically endangered over many years of English-only instruction in our schools and the historical suppression of Alaska Native languages. It is incumbent upon our school systems to help restore this loss. The addition of targeted funding for schools in response to this emergency is critical in restoring and stopping the loss of Alaska Native Indigenous languages.

In many regions of the state, the most qualified instructor candidates for Alaska Native Indigenous languages are often elders who are barred from full teacher certification due to a lack of instruction in areas such as upper level mathematics and English–areas that are irrelevant to the subject matter. When the speakers of a language possessing the greatest knowledge of its vocabulary and most understanding of its nuances are barred from becoming instructors by regulations created for instruction in another language, it is appropriate to review and update those regulations and programs for supporting language instruction.

Adopted 2018, 2023
(Sunsets 2028)

5.29 URGING A STATEWIDE ANNUAL ALASKA INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE CONFERENCE

AASB urges the Governor of Alaska, the Alaska State Legislature and the State Board of Education to provide an annual Alaska Indigenous Language Conference that will benefit indigenous Alaskan languages.

Rationale. The State of Alaska signed House Bill 216, October 23, 2014, twenty Alaska Native languages as official languages for the State of Alaska. The Governor of Alaska, September 23, 2018 declared an emergency for Alaska Native languages. Alaska Indigenous Language instructional staff do not have a venue where they can interact and collaborate with fellow language and cultural Instructors from across the State. An Alaska Indigenous Language Statewide Conference would provide that opportunity.

Adopted 2018,
Amended 2020, 2025
(Sunsets 2030)

5.30 REQUESTING A THOROUGH ANALYSIS OF THE STATEWIDE TESTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

AASB calls upon the State of Alaska to undertake a thorough analysis of the statewide testing and accountability system to ensure an accurate, relevant, and authentic assessment of student learning.

Rationale. While assessments are a critical component of the teaching and learning process both to inform instruction and to ascertain student levels of skill and knowledge, it is imperative the information be accurate, authentic, and relevant. Given the statewide assessment scores are used to label students and rank schools and are referenced in budget discussions, it is critical the information be correct and not misinterpreted. The community is an important voice in advocating for sound accountability.

Adopted 2019
Renewed 2024
(Sunsets 2029)

5.31 ALASKA STANDARDS FOR CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE SCHOOLS

AASB supports the implementation of the Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools.

Rationale. The State of Alaska Board of Education adopted the ASCRS in 1998. Cultural standards serve as a complement to content standards. Content standards stipulate what students should know and be able to do, cultural standards provide guidance on how to engage students in learning through the local culture. We recognize all forms of knowledge, ways of knowing, and world views as equally valid, adaptable, and complementary to one another in mutually beneficial ways. These cultural standards are not intended to be inclusive, exclusive, or conclusive, and should be reviewed and adapted to fit local needs. (https://education.alaska.gov/standards/cultural)

A firm grounding in the culture indigenous to a particular place is a fundamental prerequisite for the development of culturally-healthy students and communities associated with that place, and thus is an essential ingredient for identifying the appropriate qualities and practices associated with culturally responsive educators, curriculum and schools. (p2, ASCRS)

Adopted 2020
Renewed 2025
(Sunsets 2030)

5.32 ALASKA HISTORY TEXTBOOK

AASB requests that the Alaska Legislature support the production of a printed and/or digital textbook on the history of Alaska, co-authored by western and Alaska Native scholars, for statewide use in public schools.

Rationale. High school graduation from public schools in Alaska currently requires successful completion of a 1/2 credit (one semester) course in Alaska history, which students may satisfy by demonstrating mastery of the state standards. While the state

standards describe the required content of the course, source materials are left to the discretion of the teachers and students. A standard textbook that presents the western and Alaska Native perspectives on an equal footing would serve to promote a more deeply shared understanding of the salient events and interactions that affected the development and influenced the multiple cultures of our state. This would foster mutual understanding across our diverse cultures and strengthen civic engagement across the state.

Adopted 2020
Renewed 2025
(Sunsets 2030)

5.33 RESTORING THE ALASKA LEARNING NETWORK (AKLN)

AASB requests that the Alaska State Legislature re-establish the Alaska Learning Network (AKLN) and fund it to the FY 2017 funding level plus inflation, at a minimum, for the purpose of allowing districts to share course offerings and provide individual students with opportunities to take courses not offered or accessible at their school.

Rationale. School districts across regional and rural Alaska face challenges in offering a full range of courses due to staffing limitations, small student populations, and resource constraints. These challenges are particularly acute in small schools, where students may have limited access to advanced coursework, world languages, electives, and career and technical education (CTE) pathways.

The Alaska Learning Network (AKLN) previously provided a structure for districts to share instructional resources, increase efficiency, and broaden course offerings across the state. Reestablishing and modernizing AKLN would support student access to advanced coursework, dual credit opportunities, and career pathways, while helping districts maximize existing teaching resources.

Adopted 2021
(Sunsets 2026)

5.34 SUPPORT FOR EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT (ESSA) PRIORITIES

AASB supports racial and socioeconomic equity in education, raising the levels of achievement of all students, particularly those at the lower levels of performance, and eliminating the racial and socioeconomic predictability and disproportionality of achievement. AASB fully supports the proposed priorities for American History and Civics programs authorized by ESSA**,** including culturally responsive teaching and teaching about institutional and systemic racism.

Rationale. AASB supports school districts that aim to identify and address disparities among cohorts of students and identify district roles in erasing them. AASB acknowledges that the historic and persistent achievement gap between ethnic and socioeconomic subgroups of students is unacceptable, and also acknowledges the fact that responsibilities for disparities among young people rest with adults, and that districts must address and overcome inequities including institutional racism to provide all students with the support and opportunity to succeed.

Because authentic multicultural education is grounded in the lives of students; draws on the voices of those being studied; critically supports students' identities; critiques curriculum content; invites students to engage in real issues; and explores how social and economic institutions have contributed to inequality (Wayne Au, 2009); it provides a path for success for all students.

The State of Alaska Board of Education adopted the Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools in 1998. A firm grounding in the culture indigenous to a particular place is a fundamental prerequisite for the development of culturally-healthy students and communities associated with that place, and thus is an essential ingredient for identifying the appropriate qualities and practices associated with culturally responsive educators, curriculum and schools. (p2, ASCRS)

Adopted 2021
Amended 2023
(Sunsets 2028)

5.36 ~~SAFE AND SECURE STORAGE OF FIREARMS~~ FIREARM SAFETY

AASB encourages responsible firearm ownership and prevention of firearm injuries. AASB encourages districts to distribute information about safe firearm storage and to educate all students appropriately in use and handling of firearms, including hunter education where appropriate.

~~AASB encourages responsible firearm ownership for risk mitigation. Providing Alaska's students and staff with a safe educational environment remains a top priority for AASB. It is recommended that AASB partner with the Be Smart campaign to help keep Alaska's schools safe by collaborating with and distributing the "Be Smart" safe and secure firearm storage information to all member districts, strategic partners, stakeholders, state education entities, healthcare-providers, and non-profits.~~

~~The Be SMART campaign encourages responsible firearm ownership and aims to reduce firearm deaths as a result of children getting their hands on unsecured firearms. The campaign raises awareness about unintentional shootings by children and how to securely store firearms in the home. Parents and caretakers are encouraged to "Be SMART" by taking these five simple steps to help prevent shootings by children:~~

- ~~Secure all firearms in your home and vehicles;~~
- ~~Model responsible behavior around firearms;~~
- ~~Ask about the presence of unsecured firearms in other homes;~~
- ~~Recognize the risks of teen suicide;~~
- ~~Tell your peers to be SMART.~~

Rationale.
The Be SMART campaign was created to bring together all responsible adults to reduce suicides and the number of unintentional shootings that occur when children get ahold of an unsecured firearm.

Guns continue to be a leading cause of death for our youth. A national survey found that 57% of our youth are concerned that there will be a shooting in their school, and the percentages of our students who reported feeling safe at school substantially decreased between 2021 and 2022.

In Alaska:

- Firearms are the #1 cause of death for children and teens (ages 0-19) in Alaska.
- An average of 20 children and teens (ages 0-19) in Alaska die from firearms every year.
- 1 in 10 Alaska adults live in a home with an unlocked and loaded firearm.

Unsecured guns in the home pose a risk to our students beyond gun violence in schools. Every year, 350 youth under the age of 18 unintentionally shoot themselves or someone else. That's roughly one unintentional shooting per day. Gun suicide among our youth has reached the highest rate in more than 20 years, and a 2019 survey found that 26 percent of Anchorage students said they had seriously considered suicide in the last 12 months. In most child gun suicides, the gun used was one that belonged to someone in their home.

Research shows that secure firearm storage practices are associated with up to an 85 percent reduction in the risk of self-inflicted and unintentional firearm injuries among children and teens. Storing firearms securely protects any child in the home as well as students throughout the school district and community.

For more information about Be SMART, please visit BeSMARTforKids.org.

For more information about pediatric firearm safety, please visit:
https://besmartforkids.org/ https://momsdemandaction.org/
https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/2775412

(See additional notes from Subcommittee for recommended amendments to rationale)

Adopted 2023
(Sunsets 2028)

5.37 ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

AASB supports districts in adopting an Environmental Stewardship program to emphasize the role schools play in (i) fostering student led initiatives to promote stewardship and sustainability (ii) educating students on the importance of stewardship and sustainability, and (iii) demonstrating sustainable actions in school buildings and during building renovations AASB commits to increased awareness of the importance of Environmental Stewardship in schools across the State.

Rationale. Alaska has experienced direct and significant impacts of climate change. Environmental stewardship encourages near- and long-term decisions towards sustainability in school facilities (i.e., reduce waste through recycling programs) and through the education of future generations.

Adopted 2023
(Sunsets 2028)

5.38 SUPPORTING LOCAL CONTROL AND EQUITABLE, ADEQUATELY FUNDED IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND COMPUTER SCIENCE EDUCATION

~~The Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB) recognizes that artificial intelligence (AI) and computer science (CS) are rapidly becoming foundational components of K-12 education nationally, and that fluency in these fields is increasingly essential for students entering the workforce or postsecondary education after graduation. As the bodies responsible for the success of all students in their districts, Alaska school boards share a strong interest in ensuring students graduate well prepared for this changing landscape. Artificial intelligence (AI) is already present in Alaska classrooms, with teachers and students using generative AI tools, and Alaska school districts must be prepared to engage proactively with this emerging technology. AASB therefore resolves that:~~

- AASB encourages DEED to engage directly with school boards, superintendents, and AASB when developing AI-related standards and guidance.

- AASB supports Alaska's Strategic Framework for Artificial Intelligence in K-12, developed with AASB's participation on the Alaska AI K12 Advisory Group, and requests ongoing consultation with local school districts and boards to develop voluntary guidance and standards for AI and Computer science education in Alaska’s public schools as this Framework evolves.

- AASB affirms that local school boards must retain final authority over the adoption, content, and implementation timeline of any AI or computer science curriculum, instructional materials, or use policy within their district.

- AASB declares that state funding is a mandatory precondition for any state-imposed AI or computer science, statewide course mandate, standards requirement, or compliance framework. Specifically, AASB requires that the Alaska Legislature fully appropriate, prior to or concurrent with enactment, dedicated and sustained funding sufficient to cover teacher professional development and credentialing, instructional materials, infrastructure and connectivity upgrades, and district compliance and reporting costs.

- AASB urges the Alaska Legislature and DEED to provide meaningful phase-in flexibility for small and rural districts that currently lack AI/CS-endorsed or certified staff, rather than a single statewide compliance deadline, and to ensure that any phase-in period does not require districts to bear implementation costs before state funding is delivered.

- AASB supports districts' ability to draw on external partners, vendors, and advocacy organizations for AI and computer science curriculum and professional development resources, provided that any such engagement preserves local board decision-making authority and does not obligate the district or the state to a particular vendor's platform, standards, or policy framework.

- AASB opposes a statewide AI or computer science graduation requirement in Alaska at this time, holding that funded professional development, certification pathways, and instructor capacity must come first.

Rationale.
(Subcommittee recommends moving first paragraph of draft resolution into the rationale)

AI and computer science instruction affects every Alaska school district, though the degree of need varies given the state's size and geographic diversity. All districts share the same core gaps: dedicated funding, staff certification, and curriculum support, with none of these currently addressed statewide. Small and rural REAAs may face additional, compounding challenges tied to infrastructure, connectivity, and distance

As of 2026, 134 bills related to AI in education have been introduced across 31 states, and at least eleven states have enacted AI-in-education legislation.

5.39 ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN SCHOOLS

AASB urges the Alaska Legislature and the Department of Education and Early Development to provide districts with funding, model policy guidance, and professional development to support responsible AI adoption, with particular attention to the needs of small and rural districts that may lack dedicated technology staff. AASB supports integrating AI literacy — including ~~its~~ capabilities, limitations, and ethical use **of all devices** — into student instruction, so that students are prepared to use these tools responsibly rather than encountering them without guidance.

Rationale. Generative AI tools are already in widespread use by students and teachers, often faster than districts have been able to develop policy to guide that use. Without clear local policy, districts face inconsistent practice around plagiarism and academic integrity, uneven protection of student data shared with AI platforms, and wide gaps between students who receive guided instruction in using these tools and those who do not. A growing number of states have moved to require or strongly encourage local AI policies, recognizing that guidance developed at the state level can help districts move faster and avoid duplicating effort, while leaving room for local boards to adapt policy to their own community and staffing capacity. Given the pace of change in this area, districts and the state should expect this policy area to require regular review and updates rather than a fixed, one-time framework.