



ALASKA COUNCIL OF
SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

JOINT POSITION STATEMENTS

2021

Student achievement
is our ***number one priority.***

Adequate funding
remains our most ***critical need.***

Priority Funding for Education

The State of Alaska must provide timely, reliable, and predictable revenue for schools, funding the actual cost of education in all districts and providing full and equitable funding for all initiatives, laws, and mandates that require additional resources. Early notification of funding and forward funding are crucial to sound financial management, as well as recruitment and retention of quality educators.

Revenue Enhanced Fiscal Plan Imperative

Alaska has made progress by cutting the budget and restructuring the use of Permanent Fund earnings for sustainable funding of both the permanent fund dividend and a portion of government services. State expenditures have been cut by approximately 43% (\$3.45 billion) excluding dividends since FY13 when the current run of deficit spending began.

Implementation of a long-term, multi-revenue fiscal plan remains imperative to maximize districts' ability to meet student needs. Diversified revenue streams are critical in the current fiscal climate to address the remaining deficit and ensure the ability to fund service increases associated with economic development, inflation, and deferred maintenance capital requirements while maintaining the existing minimal reserves in the Constitutional Budget Reserve. For the coming fiscal years, the state legislature must consider options for new revenue, such as new taxation (income, sales, education head tax, etc.), changes in oil taxes, and further restructuring of the Permanent Fund Dividend income stream.

ACSA opposes cost shifting state expenditure responsibilities to local governments.

COVID-19 Hold Harmless Funding

October student enrollment numbers are the biggest determinant of state revenue for districts in Alaska. COVID-19 has caused major enrollment disruptions. Current Hold Harmless statutes provide some relief to districts for enrollment losses in neighborhood brick and mortar schools, but Hold Harmless does not provide protection for migration to homeschool or loss of intensive needs students. ACSA supports legislative action that would provide FY21 Hold Harmless funding at 100% for the entire Foundation Formula based on FY20 OASIS enrollment counts for districts with decreased brick and mortar enrollment. This will allow districts to honor employment contracts and commitments made for FY21.

Social, Emotional, and Mental Health

Alaska's students endure extremely high rates of trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), reflected in Alaska having the highest rate of teen suicide attempts in the nation.

ACSA urges the state to provide funding and resources so schools can partner with local communities to implement comprehensive, culturally responsive, school-based mental health programs to foster the health and development of students.

ACSA supports targeted funding to enable schools to recruit, retain, and increase students' access to school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, nurses, and mental health specialists and to provide additional professional development for all staff to meet the increasing and diverse needs of all students.