

ALASKA COUNCIL



OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

2026

Alaska Council of School Administrators

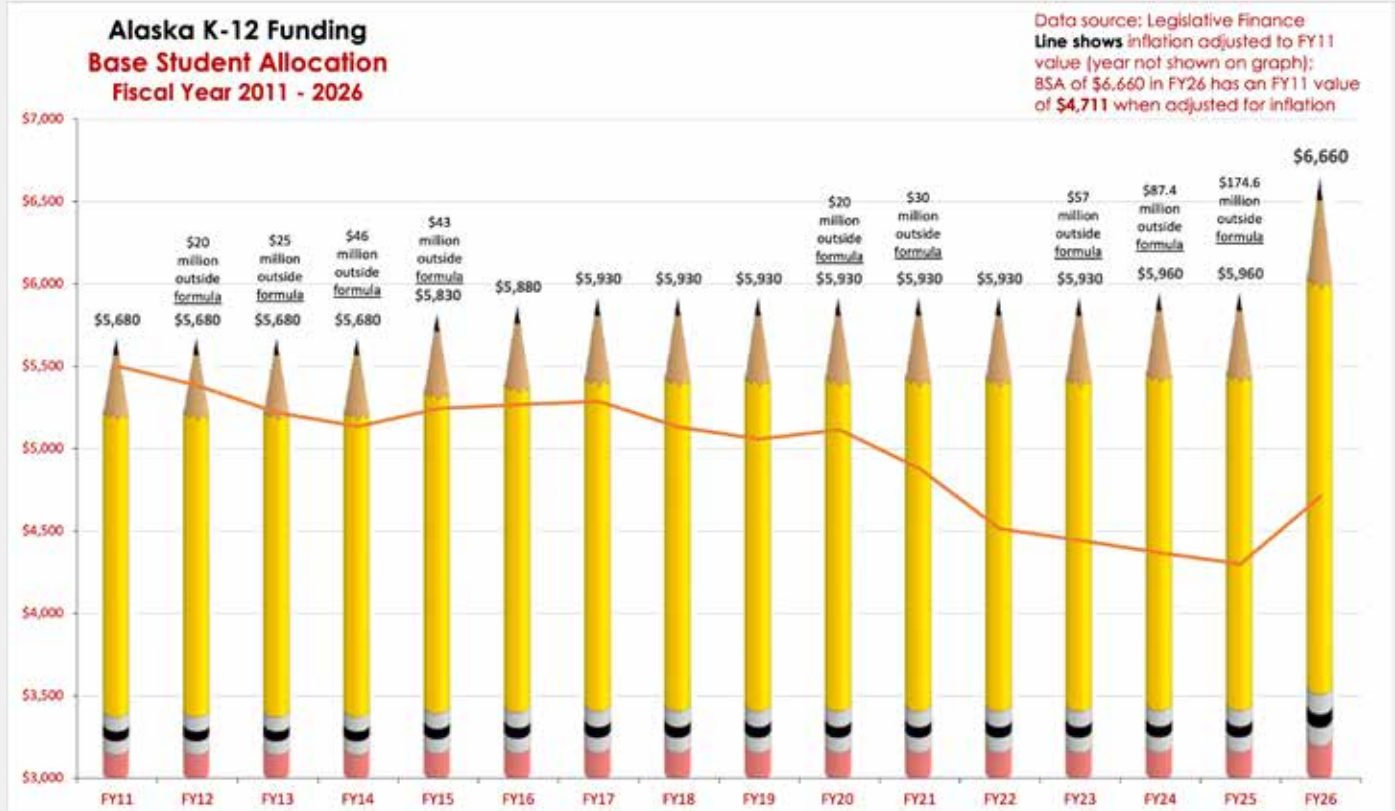
Joint Position Statements

**Student Achievement is our
Number One Priority.**

**Sustainable Funding Remains
our Most Critical Need.**

PRIORITY FUNDING FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

The State of Alaska has a constitutional responsibility to provide timely, reliable, and predictable revenue for schools, funding the actual cost of education in all districts and to provide full and equitable funding for all initiatives, laws, and mandates that require additional resources. **Early notification and predictable funding are crucial to sound financial management, planning, and the recruitment and retention of quality educators.**

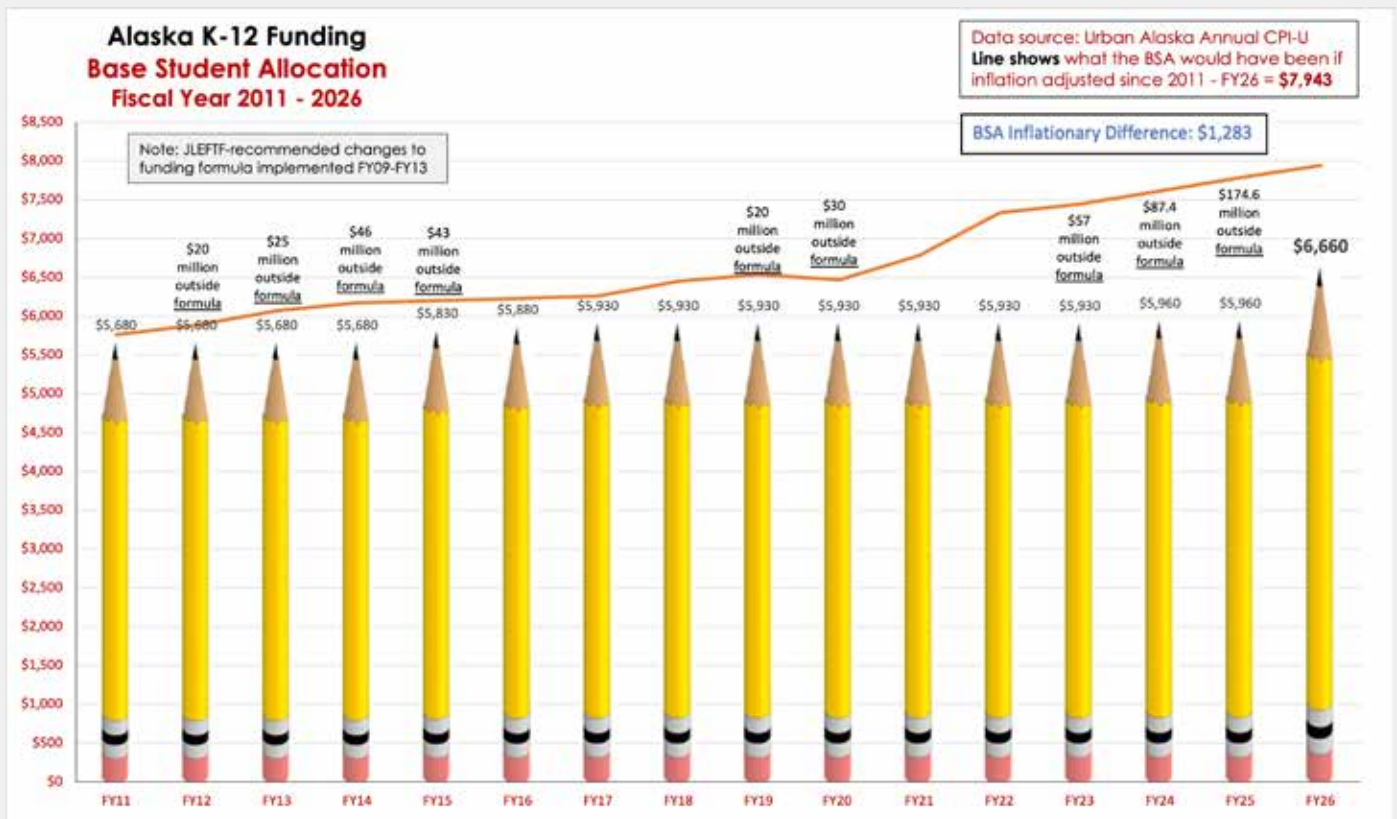


The line in the chart above shows inflation adjustment to FY11 value; BSA of \$6,660 in FY26 has an FY11 value of \$4,711 when adjusted for inflation.

We are grateful to the Legislature for overriding the Governor's veto of education funding and increasing the Base Student Allocation. The impact of not having inflation-proofed the BSA, and rising costs in health care, transportation, operations, and maintenance continue to erode the purchasing power of schools. This makes it difficult to maintain high academic achievement and meet accountability requirements across the Alaska public school system, (e.g., the Alaska Reads Act). To keep pace with inflation since FY11, schools and communities require a \$1,283 increase in the Base Student Allocation based on the Urban Alaska Annual CPI-U Calculation.

While the Foundation Formula has been a great tool in making funding equitable for children in Alaska, we are in support of the legislative education funding task force reviewing the variables and multipliers within the formula (ie. school size factor, CTE factor, special needs factor, intensive needs factor, correspondence factor), as well as the residential school stipend. Over time, the effectiveness of the current factors have eroded.

In order to reverse the ongoing out-migration and economic decline in the state of Alaska, it is imperative that the state invest in education.



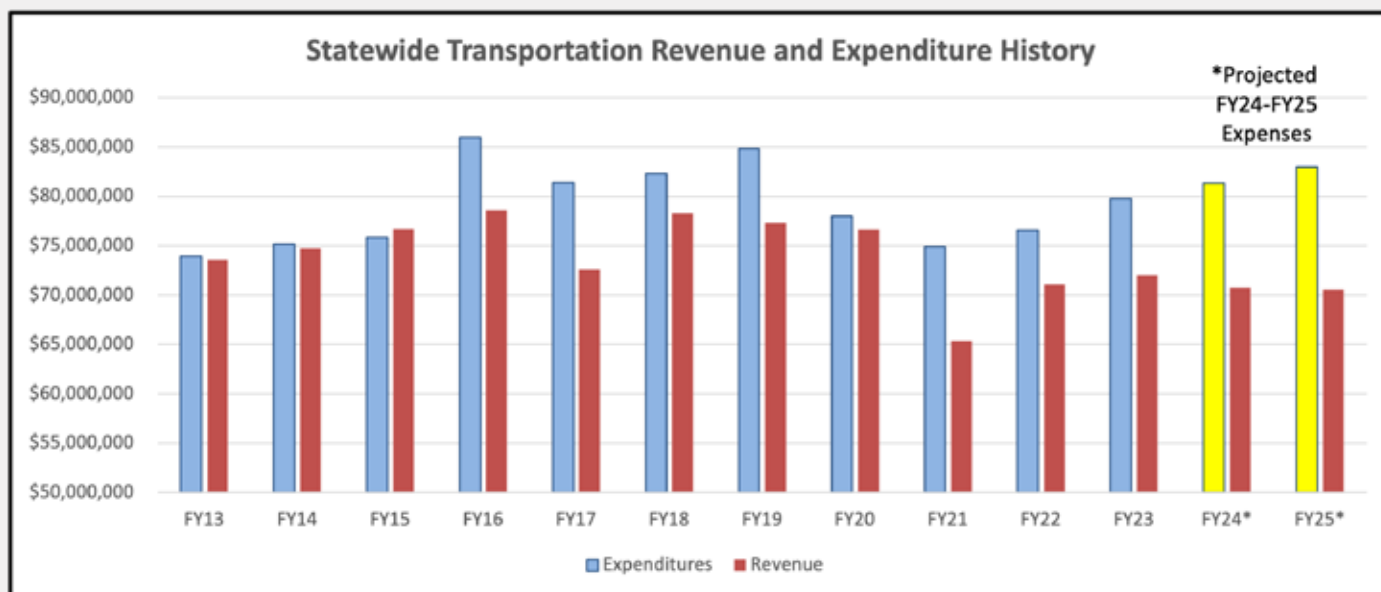
The line in the chart above shows what the BSA would have been if inflation adjusted since FY11 - FY26 = \$7,943.

Implementation of a long-term, multi-revenue fiscal plan remains essential to maximize the ability of districts to meet student needs. Diversified revenue streams are critical in the current fiscal climate to address deficits and ensure the ability to fund service increases associated with economic development, inflation, deferred maintenance and capital requirements. This approach can preserve the Permanent Fund Dividend for future generations.

ACSA opposes cost shifting state expenditure responsibilities to local governments. ACSA strongly opposes any efforts by the State to unnecessarily limit or reduce the resources districts rely upon to support non-instructional or community-based programs, such as community services, afterschool programs, and/or pupil transportation. We urge the state to abide by the definition of local contribution found in 4 AAC 09.990(b), which is limited to “money appropriated to a district’s school operating fund by the city or borough,” and to halt their pursuit of a new definition of local contributions under the cap as any funds provided by the municipalities to the districts.

TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

It is imperative that the State of Alaska increase and inflation-proof funding for pupil transportation. Student attendance is directly tied to the availability of transportation and routes, and Alaska has the highest rate of chronic absenteeism in the country. State transportation funding has increased only 20% since 2016, while costs have increased almost 40%.



Without this increase, our responsibility to ensure a free and appropriate public education for students is compromised, and districts will struggle to provide Alaska’s children with safe, reliable, accessible transportation from home to school in accordance with Alaska statute.

Additionally, staffing shortages have resulted in increased costs to recruit and retain drivers and attendants, while required expenditures for maintenance, repair, supplies, and shipping have risen to unprecedented levels. Statewide transportation costs have exceeded the amount of state pupil transportation funding by over \$65.5 million.

When investment in transportation does not happen, districts are required to divert funding from the classroom to non-instructional services.

The pupil transportation grant, which is based on student enrollment, has decreased over time due to the lack of a hold-harmless provision to stabilize funding. Despite fewer children, routes often cannot be reduced or shortened without significantly impacting accessibility. Additionally, a growing number of transportation services support accessibility for students with special needs, which are included as required services in IEPs. Cutting routes can also lead to longer travel times for students. Many districts have been forced to reduce routes due to insufficient resources, even as community feedback highlights the need for greater accessibility to transportation services.

Increasing transportation funding is one of the most direct and cost-effective ways to increase attendance and improve student outcomes. ASCA asks the legislature to explore the inclusion of alternative transportation, such as the use of vans and allowance of offroad CDL’s to be included in pupil transportation. With unique geographic challenges, severe weather, wildlife, and vast distances, Alaska’s students depend on safe and reliable transportation via air, ferry, and road to access their constitutional right to a free public education.

PREPARING, ATTRACTING, AND RETAINING QUALIFIED EDUCATORS

Recruiting and retaining highly-effective educators and leaders is imperative to increase student achievement and eliminate academic disparity for all of Alaska’s children—especially those with special needs.

Districts must be able to provide nationally competitive compensation, attractive benefits packages, combined with a robust state retirement system, to attract and keep effective educators.

Alaska districts had over 600 certified teacher vacancies on the first day of school in 2024-2025. Some Alaska schools did not have a single certified teacher on the first day of school. Alaska districts had to rely on hundreds of emergency certificates and hire both in-person and virtual third-party teachers and specialists to cover ongoing vacancies.

Streamlining the DEED certification process will help districts recruit and retain high-quality educators, specialists, and support staff (e.g., nurses, OT/PT, SLP, related services) which benefits all Alaskan children. An urgent response is needed to address the dire vacancy rates and the need for in-person educators and support personnel across Alaskan schools. ACSA supports efforts to address significant delays in certification approvals, which hinder the timely hiring of qualified educators and lead to unfilled positions.

We encourage the state to invest in the Alaska Educator Retention and Recruitment Center (AERRC), which includes a comprehensive statewide educator recruitment, retention, and mentoring program to prepare, attract, and retain high-quality, diverse educators and professionals. This includes strengthening statewide and national recruitment, investing in mentorship and induction programs to support new teachers and leaders, and expanding professional development for veteran educators. The state must also address the shortage of affordable, safe housing that affects educators in both rural and urban Alaska.

ACSA supports the state in reducing administrative and regulatory barriers so that certified teachers from out of state and those on J-1, H1-B, and other visa types can quickly obtain certification and employment in Alaska. We also urge funding for the in-state visa-issuing agency to manage the dramatic increase in international teachers needed to address the catastrophic shortage of educators across the state.

Every teacher who leaves costs an estimated \$30,000, meaning that for every 100 teachers who leave, Alaska loses \$3 million—resources that could instead be invested in stabilizing our schools and strengthening our communities.

RETIREMENT SYSTEMS

ACSA calls on the Legislature to provide and fund a public pension system or a viable alternative retirement system that fairly compensates all district staff who devote many years to Alaska's children. According to a 2023 study by the Economic Policy Institute, the average teacher earns 26.6% less than other professionals with college degrees. This gap must be offset by providing an excellent benefits package, including a robust defined benefit retirement system. Alaska is the only state in the nation where certificated staff are denied access to earn a pension.

Hundreds of teaching positions remain unfilled throughout Alaska, due to increased attrition and an alarming scarcity of applicants seeking to work in Alaska schools.

The lack of a defined benefit retirement plan, coupled with the loss of competitive salaries and increased cost of living, severely inhibits educators from pursuing a career in Alaska. Without the commitment to create a viable retirement system, the education our children and communities deserve will deteriorate.

INSTRUCTION

Strong schools are the foundation of Alaska’s workforce, communities, and long-term economic health. Alaska faces one of the largest achievement and graduation gaps in the nation. Closing these gaps will not come from short-term fixes, but from sustained investments, helping districts increase instructional quality, teacher support, school and district leadership.

State and national data consistently show that investing in high-quality teaching yields the greatest gains in student achievement, workforce readiness, and long-term economic growth—making effective instruction one of the most powerful drivers of Alaska’s future prosperity.

Rural and remote communities, spread across vast distances, often have limited access to resources, such as internet connectivity. These conditions make it even more critical to invest in high-quality instruction, strong district and school leadership, and teacher support that can meet students where they are.

To achieve this, the state must commit to equitable bandwidth connectivity for every child, sustained investments in mentoring, ongoing professional development; provide equitable resources that expand opportunity and fuel innovation; and foster partnerships with families, communities, and industry to connect learning with Alaska’s workforce needs.

HEALTHCARE COSTS AND BENEFITS

Controlling the cost of health care for our professionals is critical and promises long-term benefits in recruiting and retaining effective educators and other school staff. Implementing solutions to the long-term, escalating costs of healthcare and health insurance in the state is imperative. Healthcare costs have become a large portion of districts’ operating fund expenditures, with districts experiencing double-digit rate increases and some seeing up to 25% of their operating dollars going to healthcare. This significant cost harms a district’s ability to recruit and retain highly skilled teachers and staff to educate our children. We support legislators to consider establishing voluntary healthcare pools for school districts, providing districts with more stable and affordable options.

MAJOR MAINTENANCE

ACSA calls on the Legislature to prioritize adequate funding for school facility needs to provide safe and healthy environments for student learning. 63% of Alaska’s school buildings are more than 40 years old. A renewed commitment to achieving better educational outcomes must be accompanied with a commitment to providing children and staff an environment free from hazardous conditions. In order to provide students and staff a safe and healthy environment, we must ensure reliable, adequate, and equitable funding through the DEED school construction process for capital projects and major maintenance to existing district facilities.

The amount of funding for school building maintenance has fallen below 20% of the recommended levels, while previously funded above recommended levels ten years ago.

ACSA advocates for a thorough review and updated process of the Department of Education and Early Development's (DEED) Major Maintenance application process. We believe an updated, practical, user friendly, and efficient process will better serve school districts, to promote fiscal responsibility. We support mechanisms to more quickly address urgent, emergent, and critical projects.

ACSA strongly advocates for comprehensive safety improvements that adhere to both federal and state mandates, while also incorporating modern best practices in safety protocols. Reliable investment in school major maintenance as needs arise will save the state from future costs, ensuring the longevity of current facilities.

SCHOOL BOND DEBT REIMBURSEMENT

ACSA urges the legislature to reject any future efforts to enact a moratorium on school bond debt reimbursement. In 2015, the state placed a moratorium on school bond debt reimbursement until 2025, thereby placing the burden on school districts to fully fund bonds with local tax revenue. During that time, districts saw a corresponding increase in major maintenance costs.

As a result of the decade-long (2015-2025) moratorium on school bond debt reimbursement, many districts' deferred school construction projects have resulted in substantial deterioration and long-term structural damage, leading to unsafe conditions for children and higher costs to school districts.

Additionally, funds for REAA school major maintenance and construction are tied to the amount of bond debt reimbursement. The 10-year moratorium on bond debt reimbursement led to the deterioration of facilities in communities served by REAAs.

SCHOOL SAFETY

ACSA advocates for safe and secure schools through the prevention of school violence and cybercrime. Preventing physical violence requires clear threat assessment processes, strong relationships, and ongoing training in prevention, de-escalation, and crisis response. Preventing cybercrime requires proactive measures to protect students and staff from online harassment, data breaches, phishing, and other digital threats. We emphasize the importance of preventative as well as responsive measures to ensure school safety.

ACSA also emphasizes the need for school facilities to be designed, maintained, and updated with safety in mind. The physical structure of schools must support secure entry and exit points, safe common areas, and environments that promote both protection and a welcoming atmosphere for all students. School safety is developed through ongoing training, prevention, and planning. It also requires collaboration for the cultivation of effective and positive relationships among students, tribes, and other stakeholders.

ACSA advocates for sustained and adequate funding that fully meets the costs of providing access to mental health professionals, law enforcement, and first responders, Village Public Safety Officers, and other agencies such as the Office of Children's Services.

ACSA calls for a statewide, standardized clearinghouse of safety resources that includes prevention, de-escalation, and intervention strategies focused on building healthy relationships, communication, and conflict resolution. This clearinghouse should also provide consistent access to safety trainings, internal safety processes, and policies for threat assessment and maintaining secure school facilities. By aligning these resources statewide, schools can be proactive in ensuring consistency, effectiveness, and collaboration to create safe learning environments.

ACSA is committed to fostering safe and supportive learning environments. We believe that safety is best achieved through collaboration with trained emergency personnel, comprehensive safety planning, and strong community partnerships—not by arming teachers and educators on school property.

PHYSICAL, SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

ACSA supports targeted funding for ongoing professional development, such as mental health, first aid, and funding to enable schools to recruit, retain, and increase access to school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, nurses, and mental health specialists. These personnel are essential to maintaining student physical and mental health and wellbeing as well as supporting effective crisis response and prevention plans.

ACSA supports establishing partnerships with tribal and non-school, health providers in order to support the physical, social, emotional and mental health of Alaskan students.

Research by the American School Counselor Association demonstrates that increasing access to mental health resources in schools results in higher graduation rates, higher college entrance rates, lower absenteeism rates, and fewer suspensions. All Alaskan children, regardless of their geographic location, deserve equitable access to staff and support that nurtures their physical, social, emotional, and mental health.

SCHOOL CHOICE AND ACADEMIC ACCOUNTABILITY

ACSA continues to support Alaska’s public school choice options, including charter schools and correspondence programs, as a strength of our public school system. ACSA advocates for an increased emphasis on equitable and consistent collection of accountability measures and useful student data in all public schools. These data serves as a baseline for data-driven decision-making and to determine program efficacy. We also advocate for mandatory student participation in assessments in all state-funded education programs to support informed decision-making for families and to ensure targeted State investment in public school programs that produce positive educational outcomes.

ACSA opposes the removal of local control for the authorization of charter schools and Correspondence programs. These programs have proven successful under the current decision-making model and oversight at the local level, where local communities know the needs of their students and families best.

ACSA supports education funding as outlined in the Alaska Constitution, which states: *“No money shall be paid from public funds for the direct benefit of any religious or other private educational institution.”* ACSA opposes the use of public funds on vouchers and/or any other mechanisms that channel public funds to private or religious schools.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

ACSA supports the definition of elementary education to include universal pre-K, to ensure equitable access to fully funded, sustainable, birth to age five learning programs and nutrition services. According to the 2024-2025 Alaska Developmental Profile, over 80% of Alaska's children enter kindergarten lacking foundational preparation for learning, with this figure at almost 90% in some communities. Additionally over 60% of entering kindergarteners lack critical foundations in literacy.

These services would have the most impact on kindergarten readiness by running a minimum of 5 days a week, 6.5 hours a day. A full day pre-K program provides a foundation of critical social, emotional, and cognitive instruction to students.

As the Alaska READS Act acknowledges, early intervention, instruction and parent education are the most effective ways to create the greatest opportunity for all students to read proficiently by third grade and minimize the dropout rate. To achieve this goal, it is imperative for students to have adequate instructional time and access to public education by age 3. ACSA supports adequate, sustainable early childhood education funding as part of the base student allocation – including full (1.0) ADM funding for pre-K students.

ACSA urges the State of Alaska to fully fund early learning programs in all Alaska communities, including Head Start aligned to DEED standards, to improve educational outcomes for Alaska's students, and to make attending kindergarten a requirement.

CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION (CTE)

CTE is essential for both rural and urban Alaska's schools to support the economic and the general well-being of our communities. This starts during the foundational years with career awareness, moving to middle school with career exploration, and continues to secondary school where students engage in career-focused pathways that lead to future opportunities.

Early CTE programs build future-ready skills, while collaboration with state agencies, the University of Alaska, DEED, the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, and industry experts ensures relevant, rigorous learning aligned to industry demands. The alignment of CTE programs to meet the needs of local, tribal, regional, and state labor markets through this collaboration is also important for improving graduation rates, higher career earnings, decreasing dropout percentages, and allows students to contribute to their local and state economies.

ACSA fully supports continued and increased targeted funding for voluntary internships and pre-apprenticeship programs that prepare students for high-demand, high-skill, high-wage jobs, as well as dual credit offerings that provide students opportunities to obtain an occupational certification or credentials.

OTHER STATE ISSUES

ACSA adamantly opposes any additional unfunded mandates.

ACSA supports local governance and autonomy of Alaska's communities who are served through all 53 unique school districts.

ACSA strongly opposes the DEED proposed regulation change on local contribution and in-kind services. If adopted, the change would jeopardize districts' ability to fund non-instructional services such as pupil transportation, student nutrition, extracurricular programs, and extracurricular activities. Shifting or restricting the use of these funds undermines local governance, creates uncertainty for school districts, and threatens the stability of programs that directly benefit students, families, and their communities.

ACSA supports a non-partisan and independent State Board of Education with the sole purpose of ensuring a quality education for all Alaskan children.

ACSA is proud of Alaska's history of educational alternative programs and continues to support parent choice, so long as the directive in Alaska's Constitution is upheld: "No money shall be paid from public funds for the direct benefit of any religious or other private educational institution." This restriction includes vouchers and/or any other mechanisms that channel public funds to private or religious schools.

ACSA supports the Legislature's adherence to Alaska's Constitution in that public funds should not be diverted to private or religious institutions through vouchers or similar mechanisms.

ACSA supports a permanent increase to the Alaska Residential School Stipend to reflect the costs of operating 24/7 residential programs. These schools incur substantial expenses, such as housing, meals, utilities, and round-the-clock supervision, that are not covered by the Base Student Allocation.

FEDERAL ISSUES

SAFE AND SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS ACT (FOREST RECEIPTS)

ACSA strongly endorses the continuation of the 100-plus year partnership that was created between the federal government and communities to compensate communities financially impacted by the placement of timber reserves into federal ownership. ACSA supports the reauthorization of the Safe and Secure Rural Schools Act, included in the bipartisan infrastructure bill, that would provide funding beyond FY26 and any bill that provides a permanent funding mechanism.

EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT (ESSA)

ACSA encourages the United States Department of Education to continue to fulfill the bipartisan intention of ESSA by honoring local control. Further, ACSA encourages Congress to eliminate discretionary funding caps to allow adequate investment in education, including full funding of the education programs authorized by the bipartisan Every Student Succeeds Act.

INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT (IDEA)

ACSA supports the full funding of IDEA. By honoring its commitment to support the education of students with disabilities, Congress should enable districts to shift dollars toward new initiatives that address their local disability needs.

STUDENT NUTRITION

ACSA supports increased funding for child nutrition and food transportation. Providing breakfast, lunches, and snacks at school reduces barriers, increases student engagement and preparedness, and supports healthy communities.

OTHER FEDERAL ISSUES

ACSA strongly opposes the use of public money to fund private/religious education through vouchers or other mechanisms.

ACSA supports full and equitable funding with cost-of-living increases for E-Rate, Indian Education, Impact Aid, and all Title programs with no significant program changes.

ACSA supports broadening Title II funds to help support the recruitment and retention of teachers and administrators.

ACSA supports waiving the FERPA requirement to obtain parental consent to bill Medicaid for necessary services provided in the school setting.

ACSA supports funding for teacher housing in rural communities in Alaska.

ACSA supports funding for social-emotional learning, social workers, mental health support, school nursing, and birth to age five learning for all. For more specifics, refer to our Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Position Statement.

ACSA does not support including Pupil Transportation funds in the federal disparity test for Impact Aid.

ACSA supports the use of federal funds to retrofit and make infrastructure repairs in Alaska schools to align with modern school safety best practices. For more specifics, refer to our School Safety Statement.

ACSA supports an exemption to the \$100,000 fee for public education H1-B visa applicants.

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Priority Funding for Public Education



Transportation Funding



**Preparing, Attracting, and
Retaining Qualified Educators**



Retirement Systems



Health Care Costs and Benefits



Major Maintenance



School Bond Debt Reimbursement



School Safety



**Physical, Social, Emotional, and
Mental Health**



**School Choice and Academic
Accountability**



Early Childhood Education



Career and Technical Education

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