



KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

Clayton Holland, Assistant Superintendent of Instruction
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Phone (907) 714-8888 Fax (907) 262-1374

March 23, 2021

State of Alaska
Representative Grier Hopkins
House of Representatives Education Committee
Representative Harriet Drummond, co-chair
Representative Andi Story, co-chair
State Capitol Room 434
Juneau, Alaska 99801

RE: Support of HB 25 - PUBLIC SCHOOLS: SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Dear Representative Hopkins, and House Education members:

I am writing in support of HB 25, which will require the Alaska State Board of Education to adopt "Statewide standards for instruction in social-emotional learning." Student mental health and well-being have been an ongoing concern in Alaska, and in our school district for several years. With the interruption to in-person school, and the subsequent isolation many of our students have experienced during the pandemic, these concerns are more relevant than ever.

The KPBSD Board of Education has four [2021 State Legislative Priorities](#). This one directly relates to SEL:

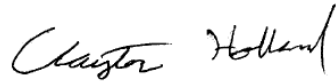
Positive School Climate, Social and Emotional Learning and Well-being

Social and emotional learning (SEL) and wellbeing is the key to providing a safe school environment, conducive to learning, and must be a high priority. With the high rates of domestic violence, childhood trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACES) in Alaska, and in light of the collective trauma our students, families, staff, and communities have experienced due to the COVID19 Global Pandemic, school efforts towards meeting social emotional needs is more critical than ever. The state must provide financial support so schools can partner with local communities to implement comprehensive, culturally appropriate school-based mental health programs that support and foster the health and development of students.

Additional funding is necessary to enable schools to increase, recruit and retain more school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, and mental health specialists. Funding is also needed to increase professional development opportunities for districts in planning and implementing interventions for students experiencing childhood trauma and other mental health challenges. Meeting the Social Emotional Learning needs of students is essential to the long-term well-being of our students and ultimately of our communities.

The Kenai Peninsula Borough School District has taken many steps over the years to address social-emotional learning (SEL) with our students. We support HB 25 and the attention this bill will bring to social-emotional learning for all school districts in Alaska.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Clayton Holland".

Clayton Holland
Assistant Superintendent of Instruction



ALASKA GATEWAY SCHOOL DISTRICT

PO BOX 226, TOK, AK 99780

Ph: 907.883.5151 Fax: 907.883.5154

Scott MacManus – Superintendent of Schools

Date: March 22, 2021

To: Representative Grier Hopkins

From: Scott MacManus, AGSD Superintendent

RE: HB 25 - Relating to the duties of the state Board of Education and Early Development; and to developing statewide standards for instruction in social-emotional learning

Dear Representative Hopkins,

I am writing this letter in support of HB 25, which proposes revisions to AS14.07.165(a), that will require the Alaska State School Board to adopt standards of instruction for social-emotional learning in Alaskan schools. The importance of having an SEL framework in our schools is hard to overstate. These are the kind of “soft” skills that employers are seeking in the 21st century workplace, where the skills and the ability to collaborate and work as a team are at a premium and highly valued, and that all schools should be addressing in their curriculum.

In Alaska Gateway School District, we have been trying to implement SEL best-practices through CASEL 5, which addresses five broad and interrelated areas of SEL competence: *Self-awareness, Self-management, Social awareness, Relationship skills, and Responsible decision-making*. Many school districts, states, and countries have used the CASEL 5 to establish preschool to high school learning standards and competencies that articulate what students should know and be able to do for academic success, school and civic engagement, health and wellness, and fulfilling careers.

Having said this, I fully endorse having an approved Statewide SEL framework that will further help to guide the practice and implementation in our district, in a way that best suits our students and district. Therefore I support HB25 and its proposed revision to current state statute.

Sincerely,

Scott MacManus, AGSD Superintendent

“Educating all students to reach their full potential as responsible citizens”

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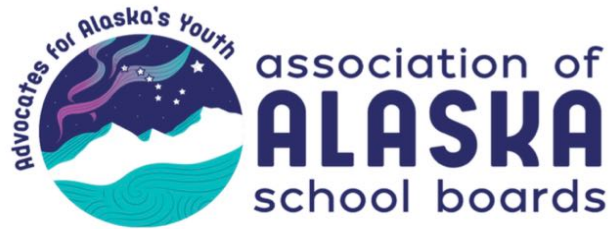
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March 18, 2021

Association of Alaska School Boards
1111 West 9th Street
Juneau, AK 99801
(907) 463-1660
aasb@aasb.org

RE: Letter of Support for HB 25

The Association of Alaska School Boards is pleased to support HB 25 – Public Schools: Social/Emotional Learning. AASB is heavily involved in supporting school districts throughout Alaska to integrate SEL practices that support the whole child. Many students arrive at school with a myriad of experiences and challenges that negatively affect aspects of learning such as behavior, discipline, and the ability to focus. Our schools exist to provide an excellent education every day to every student no matter their challenges. Integrating SEL into school-wide processes and structures creates safe, supportive learning environments, builds positive relationships and promotes SEL skill development so that children are able to focus on learning and take advantage of that excellent education. The bill is broad enough to provide districts the latitude to localize SEL to fit the needs of students, families, and communities. We encourage the passage of HB 25.

Included is the AASB membership 2021 legislative priority for Student Wellness and Safe Schools as well as Resolution 3.2 on social-emotional learning.

Katie Oliver, President

Norm Wooten, Director of Advocacy

Student Wellness and Safe Schools – prioritize efforts and funding to support and promote student wellness and safety

- Address the impacts of the pandemic on student wellness (physical and mental)
- Support student mental health and the required services
- Support safe, connected schools
- Support trauma informed practices in Alaska schools
- Prevent sexual abuse by school staff through appropriate professional boundaries policy and training
- Reduce school and student violence

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 review the research in order to advocate, create and sustain programs of social and emotional learning and other initiatives that build assets in Alaska’s children and teens, provide positive adult role models and support, and incorporate culturally responsive awareness.

Rationale. Research shows that effective schools, families, faith communities, and all adults in our communities can contribute to the positive development of youth. The difference between troubled teens and those leading healthy, productive, and positive lives, is strongly affected by the presence of what is labeled “developmental assets[®].” These assets are additive, meaning that the more a young person has, the better. Forty of these assets were identified – 20 exist in the student’s environment and 20 belong in the head and heart of every child. These developmental assets serve as building blocks for human development in a young person’s life and are developed through positive relationships with adults.

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.



March 21, 2021

Dear Representative Hopkins,

I am writing on behalf of the All Alaska Pediatric Partnership (A2P2) to express support for the House Bill 25 that calls for the inclusion of “statewide standards for instruction in social-emotional learning.”

A2P2 is an Alaska nonprofit focused on collaborations, activities and programs that drive improvements to the systems of care, services and education for Alaska’s children. Our board of directors is comprised of medical professionals, hospital leadership and leaders from the public health and community-based services, among others.

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is an integral part of education and human development. SEL is the process through which children and adults acquire the competencies that enable them to understand and manage emotions, establish and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships and make responsible decisions. While no one argues the importance of math, reading and writing as critical skills to supporting a stable and productive workforce, so should we consider SEL skills to be just as critical to a child’s success in learning and later participation in society and the workforce. Additionally, a learning environment that prioritizes the strengthening of social and emotional skills is likely to be a more safe and positive learning environment altogether. The National Education Association has summarized the importance of teaching SEL in schools in the attached research article titled, “The importance of social emotional learning for all students across all grades.”

Incorporating statewide SEL standards in public schools can help drive equity across school districts by supporting students and teachers in the co-creation of flourishing and thriving schools and communities.

Sincerely,

Tamar Ben Yosef
Executive Director
All Alaska Pediatric Partnership



March 23, 2021

Members of the House Education Committee
C/O The Honorable Representative Harriet Drummond
C/O The Honorable Representative Andi Story
State Capitol Room 108 and 403
Juneau AK, 99801

RE: Letter of Support for HB 25: Statewide Standards for Social-Emotional Learning

Dear Representatives Drummond and Story,

The Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (ABADA) and the Alaska Mental Health Board (AMHB) are statutorily charged with advising, planning, and coordinating behavioral health services and programs funded by the State of Alaska. The Boards are also tasked with evaluating federal and state laws concerning mental health, alcohol, and other drug and substance misuse prevention and treatment services (A.S. 47.30.661, A.S. 44.29.100).

Our Boards are in full support of this bill allowing the Alaska Board of Education and Early Development to adopt baseline educational standards for social-emotional learning. Social-emotional learning skills are considered a protective factor against Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and can help mitigate traumatic childhood stresses and promotes resilience in youth. Social-emotional skills like self-regulation, learning how to listen, how to work in groups, and how to be empathetic, serve as the foundation for lifelong functioning. The benefits of social-emotional learning can span a wide range of domains from mental health and emotional wellbeing, to academic achievement, physical health, and job and career success.

Establishing statewide standards for social-emotional learning ensures that young Alaskans have the same opportunities to develop these skills regardless of geography, income level or access to external mental health supports. Social-emotional learning skills are a practice to be continued throughout the lifespan and should be infused throughout all curriculum areas and ages of instruction.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Beverly Schoonover
Executive Director

CC: Representative Grier Hopkins