



ALASKA COUNCIL OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

JOINT POSITION
STATEMENTS

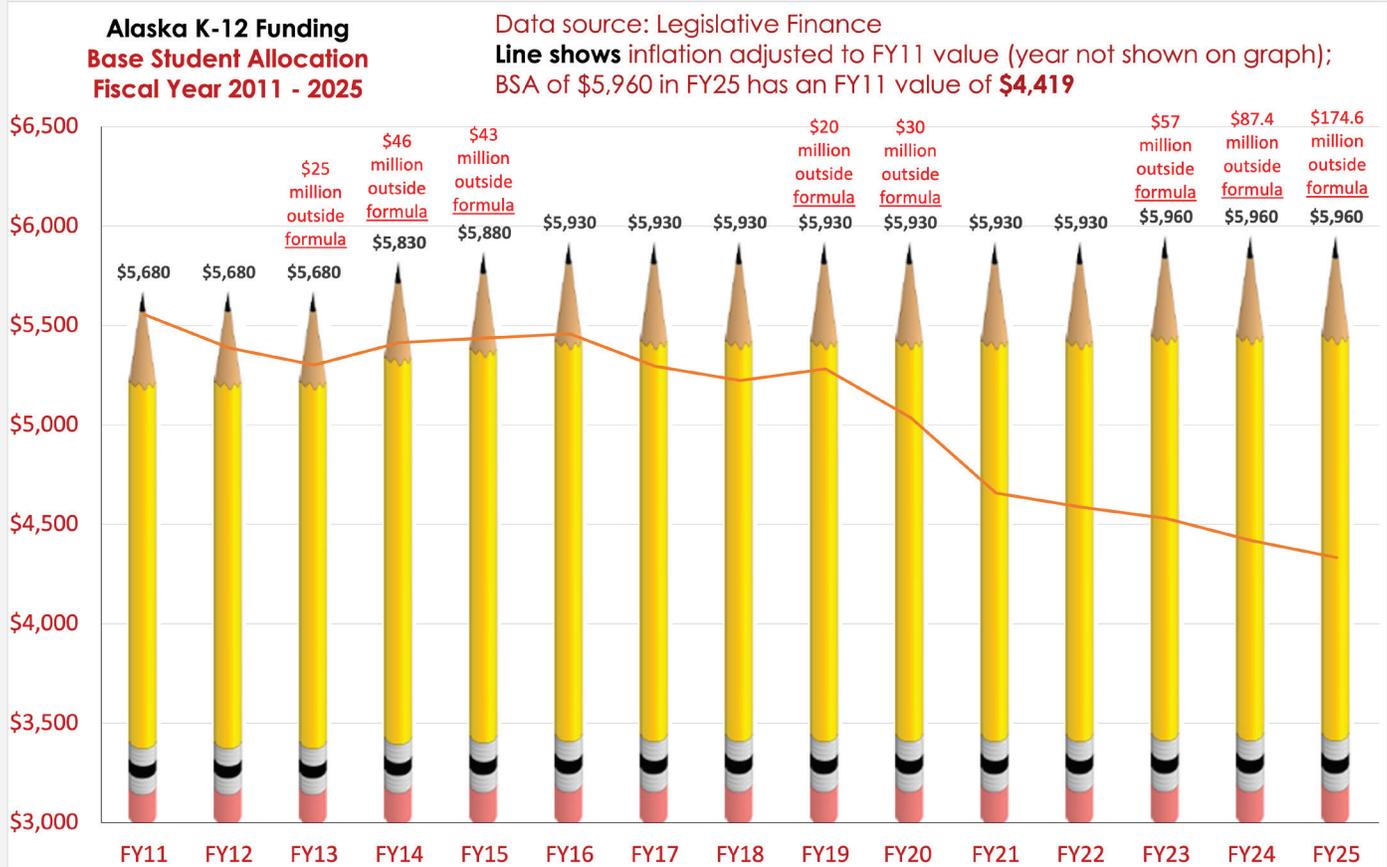
2025

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, as well as recruitment and retention of quality educators.**



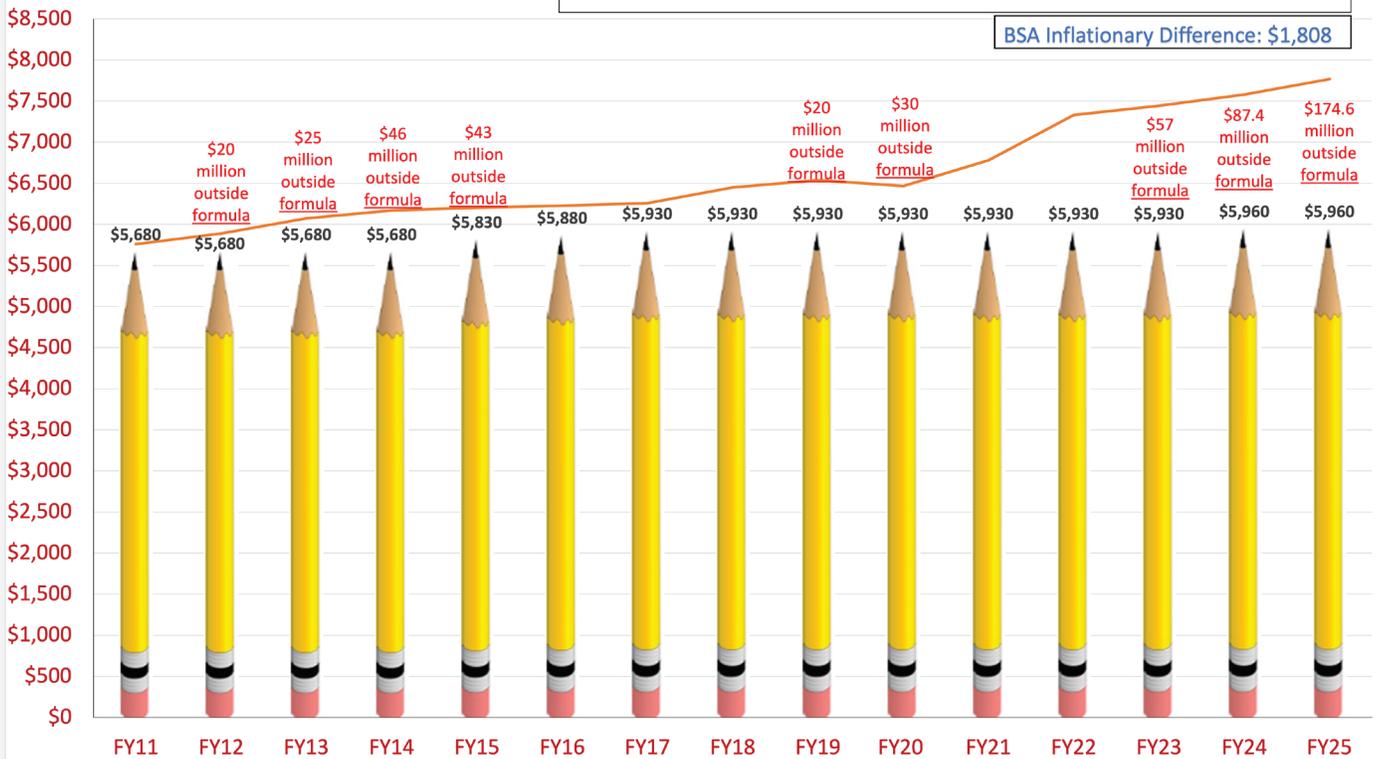
The line in the chart above shows inflation adjustment to FY11 value; BSA of \$5,960 in FY25 has an FY11 value of \$4,419 when adjusted for inflation.

We are grateful to the Legislature for the one-time outside the formula education funding increase in 2024. However, the lack of a permanent increase inside the formula has exacerbated the impact of prolonged flat funding, historic inflation, and rising costs in health care, transportation, operations, and maintenance. These factors have eroded the purchasing power of schools, making it impossible 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 \$1,808 increase in the Base Student Allocation based on the Urban Alaska Annual CPI-U Calculation.

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. 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 any deficit and ensure the ability to fund service increases associated with economic development, inflation, and deferred maintenance capital requirements, while preserving the Permanent Fund Dividend for future generations.

**Alaska K-12 Funding
Base Student Allocation
Fiscal Year 2011 - 2025**

Data source: Urban Alaska Annual CPI-U
Line shows what the BSA would have been if inflation adjusted since 2011 - FY25 = **\$7,769**



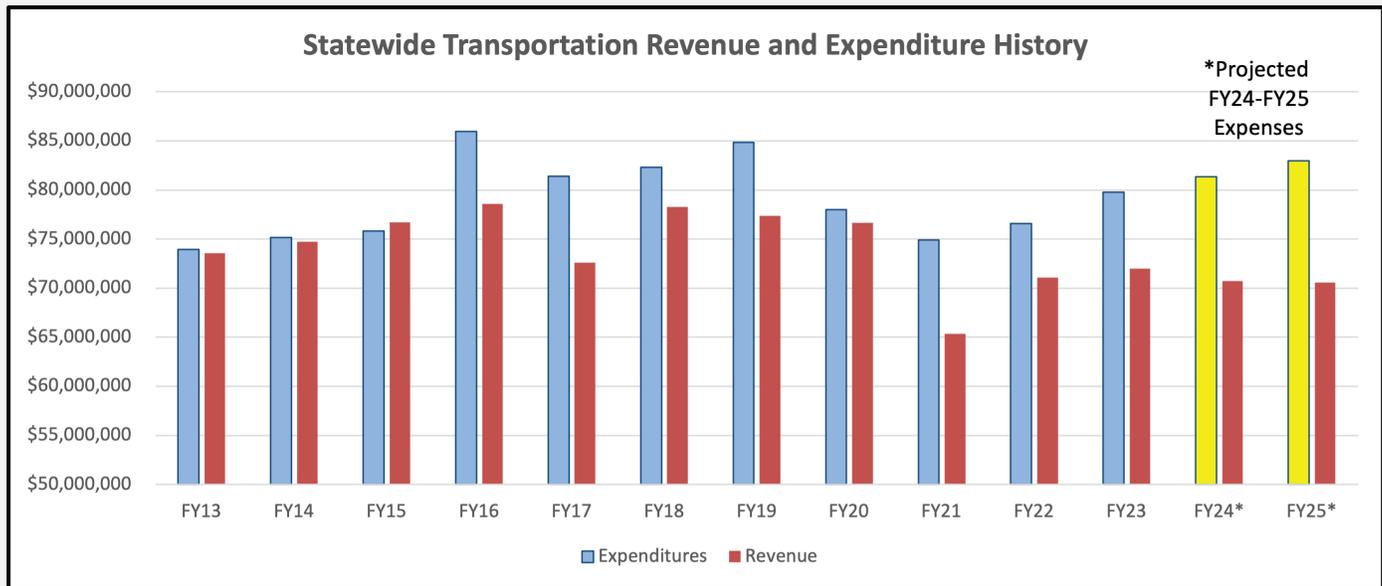
BSA Inflationary Difference: **\$1,808**

The line in the chart above shows what the BSA would have been if inflation adjusted since FY11 - FY25 = \$7,769.

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, including those appropriated to special revenue funds for non-instructional purposes.

TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

It is imperative that the State of Alaska increase and inflation-proof funding for pupil transportation. Student attendance is directly tied to availability of transportation/routes, and Alaska has the highest rate of chronic absenteeism in the country. State transportation funding has not increased since 2016, although 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 not be able to provide Alaska’s students 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 \$44.4 million**, requiring districts to further redirect operating funds 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 students, routes often cannot be reduced or shortened without significantly impacting accessibility for those who remain. Cutting routes can also lead to longer travel times for some students. Many districts have already been forced to reduce routes due to insufficient resources, even as community feedback highlights the need for greater accessibility to transportation services.

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 students, especially for those with special needs.

Alaska districts had over 600 certified teacher vacancies on the first day of school in 2024-2025, and some Alaska schools did not have a single certified teacher on the first day of school. Alaska districts also had to use hundreds of emergency certificates. ACSA supports efforts to address significant delays in certification approvals, which hinder the timely hiring of qualified educators and lead to unfilled positions.

Streamlining the certification process, including allocating additional resources, will help districts recruit and retain high-quality educators, benefiting all of Alaska’s students. An urgent response is needed to address the dire vacancy rates.

Districts must be equipped with the resources to provide nationally competitive compensation, a benefits package, combined with a robust state retirement system, to correct this issue.

Support to a comprehensive statewide program should be funded to prepare, attract, and retain high quality, diverse educators, and professionals. ACSA recommends strengthening statewide and national recruiting efforts along with a renewed commitment to growing our own educators, teachers, paraprofessionals, counselors, principals, and superintendents. We encourage the state to invest in robust mentorship and induction programs for new teachers and education leaders to provide support during their initial years including: reducing turnover, improving retention by fostering a supportive professional environment, job-alike support and professional development opportunities for veteran educators to share best practices, and collaborate with peers. The State must provide funding and policies improving access to safe housing for all due to the difficulty in finding adequate housing for educators in Alaska's rural communities.

We support the state reducing administrative and regulatory barriers, enabling certified teachers from out of state and those on J-1, H1-B, and other visa types to quickly obtain certification and employment in Alaska. We support the state funding an in-state visa issuing agency to sponsor international educator hires.

RETIREMENT SYSTEMS

ACSA calls on the Legislature to provide and fund a public pension system or viable alternative retirement system that fairly compensates all district staff who devote many years to Alaska's children. According to a 2022 study by the Economic Policy Institute, the average teacher earns 26.4% 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 stands alone in the nation, with its certificated staff as the only PK-12 group denied the opportunity to earn either a pension or Social Security.

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, prohibits educators from being able to afford pursuing a career in Alaska. Without the State's commitment to restoring these essential benefits, Alaska's educational system will continue to deteriorate, unable to support the functional programs that Alaska's students deserve.

HEALTH CARE 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. Health care costs have become a large portion of districts' operating fund expenditures, with districts experiencing double-digit rate increases and some seeing 15-20% of their operating dollars going to healthcare. This significant cost harms a district's ability to fund needs, as well as reducing a district's ability to maintain the same level of benefits when no additional funding is available to cover cost increases.

MAJOR MAINTENANCE

ACSA advocates for a thorough review and updated process of the Department of Education and Early Development's (DEED) Major Maintenance application process. 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. We believe an updated and efficient process will better serve school districts, to promote fiscal responsibility.

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, preserving resources and ensuring the longevity of current facilities.

SCHOOL BOND DEBT REIMBURSEMENT

ACSA urges the legislature to reject a moratorium on school bond debt reimbursement in the future. 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 their own tax revenue.

Due to the moratorium on school bond debt reimbursement, many districts deferred school construction projects that resulted in deterioration and long-term damage, leading to unsafe conditions 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 had lasting effects on the capitalization of that fund and led to the deterioration of facilities in communities served by REAAs.

SCHOOL SAFETY

ACSA advocates for full funding and 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 trainings, de-escalation trainings, internal safety processes, and policies to assess threats to the school and to have a secure school facility.

ACSA advocates for safe and secure schools through the prevention of school violence and cyber crime. We emphasize the importance of preventative as well as responsive measures to ensure school safety. School safety is developed through ongoing training, prevention, and planning. It also requires collaboration for the cultivation of effective, positive relationships among students, tribes and other stakeholders.

ACSA does not support arming educators on school property.

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 effective crisis response plans and even more crucial to crisis prevention efforts.

Alaska Statutes must be adjusted to allow schools to efficiently screen all students and work with families and community partners promptly to create appropriate, culturally responsive, school-based interventions when mental health concerns are identified.

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, lower absenteeism rates and fewer suspensions. All Alaskan students, regardless of their geographic location, deserve equitable access to staff and support that nurtures their social, emotional and mental health.

SCHOOL CHOICE AND ACADEMIC ACCOUNTABILITY

ACSA continues to support Alaska's 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 accountability measures and the collection of consistent and useful data on student outcomes in these programs as a baseline for data-driven decision-making and to determine program efficacy. We also advocate for mandatory participation in assessments for all state funded education programs to support informed decision-making for families and to ensure targeted investment in choice programs that produce educational outcomes.

ACSA opposes the removal of local control for the authorization of charter schools and Correspondence programs by DEED. These programs have proven successful under the decision-making 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, where it state: *"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, thus ensuring equitable access to fully funded, sustainable, birth to age five learning programs and nutrition services. The developmental differences of 3 and 4 year old pre-K children require developmentally appropriate instructional materials and playground equipment, all of which depends on sufficient funding. According to the 2023-2024 Alaska Developmental Profile, over 80% of Alaska's students enter kindergarten lacking foundational preparation for learning and with this figure reaching up to 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.

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

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.

CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Career and Technical Education (CTE) for both rural and urban schools is critical to high academic standards and Alaska's economic growth and stability. Collaboration through professional learning with DEED, the Department of Labor & Workforce Development, and the University of Alaska with educators and industry-based professionals is needed for the academic integration of rigorous and relevant curriculum. The pipeline of CTE services begins with early learning programs. This foundation for CTE gives students the opportunity to build future-ready skills and contribute to their local economy after high school. 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, and decreasing dropout percentages.

These programs must either be available to students before they graduate or include funding for postgraduate programs for students above age 18 in industries where only adults may receive training, e.g., marine welders.

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.

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

ACSA continues to support current financial accountability and transparency measures through independent audits and annual reporting.

OTHER STATE ISSUES

ACSA adamantly opposes any additional unfunded mandates.

Capital Improvement (CIP) funding must be fully restored and adequately fund projects to prevent the loss of public school facilities. Costs of preventative maintenance have significantly increased due to inflation and prolonged neglect to public school facilities due to unfunded major maintenance.

ACSA asks the state to help school districts identify funding sources for educator housing, to help with the educator recruitment and retention crisis.

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

ACSA strongly recommends that any review of the school funding formula should be conducted by a task force including nationally-recognized and Alaska school finance experts, and that school and district cost factors be closely reviewed.

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



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.

Advocacy Toolbox

- Live legislative hearings
- Current Education legislation
- Legislators by School District
- Legislative Tracking Resources
- 2024 Joint Position Statements
- JPS Talking Points

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For Advocacy resources and to easily track education related legislation please visit the ACSA Advocacy Tool Box at AlaskaACSA.org

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.

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.

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2025

**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



Transportation Funding



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



Retirement Systems



Health Care Costs and Benefits



Major Maintenance



School Bond Debt Reimbursement



School Safety



Social, Emotional, and Mental Health



**School Choice and Academic
Accountability**



Early Childhood Education



Career and Technical Education

**ALASKA COUNCIL OF
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***Leadership, Unity, and
Advocacy for Public Education***



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