

**SB**

**259**

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



SENATOR GRETCHEN GUESS

## Memorandum

Date: February 2, 2006

To: Senator Fred Dyson  
Chair Health, Education, and Social Services Committee

From: Senator Gretchen Guess

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Gretchen Guess".

Re: Hearing Request

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Please consider this a formal request for a hearing of Senate Bill 259, "*An act relating to children attending school; amending provisions relating to compulsory school attendance; relating to truancy and punctuality; relating to permanent fund dividend program notice requirements and to ineligibility for permanent fund dividends for violations of school truancy and attendance laws or for expulsions from school; and providing for an effective date.*" This bill denies Permanent Fund Dividend eligibility for truant children and/or their parents.

If you have any questions regarding SB 259 please feel free to contact me or my aide Wayne Leighty at x2435.

Thank you very much for your consideration.



ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
SENATOR GRETCHEN GUESS

## Sponsor Statement

### Senate Bill 259:

*"An Act relating to children attending school; amending provisions relating to compulsory school attendance; relating to truancy and punctuality; relating to permanent fund dividend program notice requirements and to ineligibility for permanent fund dividends for violations of school truancy and attendance laws or for expulsions from school; and providing for an effective date."*

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of Senate Bill 259 (SB259) is to provide a statewide tool for enforcing the current state truancy law - the loss of Permanent Fund Dividend(s) for violation(s).

#### **Background**

Alaska recognizes the value of quality public education through our constitution, state funding, and the state requirement for all residents 16 or younger to attend school (truancy law). But with practically no consequence for unexcused school absence or tardiness, our schools have difficulty maintaining consistent attendance. Teachers share anecdotes about the twins who alternate days or children constantly coming to school two hours late. Teachers and schools struggle to maintain learning progress with only sporadic and infrequent attendance.

Current Alaska Statute requires every child between ages seven and 16 years to attend school and every parent, guardian or other person having the responsibility for a child between ages seven and 16 years to maintain the child's attendance. But the statute is nearly silent on enforcement of our truancy laws, stating only "a person who knowingly fails to comply with [truancy law] is guilty of a violation," and "the governing body of a school district... shall establish procedures to prevent and reduce truancy."

#### **Solution**

SB259 provides a statewide "hammer" for enforcement of truancy laws – ineligibility for Permanent Fund Dividends for violation of truancy law. SB 259 does the following.

- For students under age 12, a violation of truancy laws (defined as ten days of absence or 14 days of late arrival/early departure) results in ineligibility for that year's PFD for all parents/guardians of the child. For students over age 12, a violation of truancy laws results in ineligibility for that year's PFD for the student.
- A school principal may approve an allowable absence when it does not interfere with the student's studies (e.g., family vacation).
- Parents of runaway or missing children will not be held liable for the student's truancy during their absence from home, and children who are homeless will not be held liable for their truancy while homeless.
- The governing body of each school district will define excused and unexcused absences, disseminate information about truancy, establish a record-keeping system for truancy, and report students in violation to the Permanent Fund Dividend Division.

Thank you for your consideration.

**SENATE BILL NO. 259**

**IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA  
TWENTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION**

**BY SENATORS GUESS, Bunde**

**Introduced: 2/1/06**

**Referred: Health, Education and Social Services, State Affairs**

**A BILL**

**FOR AN ACT ENTITLED**

1 "An Act relating to children attending school; amending provisions relating to  
2 compulsory school attendance; relating to truancy and punctuality; relating to  
3 permanent fund dividend program notice requirements and to ineligibility for  
4 permanent fund dividends for violations of school truancy and attendance laws or for  
5 expulsions from school; and providing for an effective date."

6 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

7 \* **Section 1.** AS 14.30.010(a) is amended to read:

8 (a) Every child between seven and 16 years of age shall attend school at the  
9 public school in the district in which the child resides during each school term. Every  
10 parent, guardian, or other person having the responsibility for or control of a child  
11 between seven and 16 years of age shall maintain the child in attendance at a public  
12 school in the district in which the child resides during the entire school term, except as  
13 provided in (b) and (d) of this section.

1 \* **Sec. 2.** AS 14.30.010(b) is amended to read:

2 (b) This section does not apply if a child

3 (1) is provided an academic education comparable to that offered by  
4 the public schools in the area [, EITHER] by

5 (A) attendance at a private school in which the teachers are  
6 certificated according to AS 14.20.020;

7 (B) tutoring by personnel certificated according to  
8 AS 14.20.020; or

9 (C) attendance at an educational program operated in  
10 compliance with AS 14.45.100 - 14.45.200 by a religious or other private  
11 school;

12 (2) attends a school operated by the federal government;

13 (3) has a physical or mental condition that a competent medical  
14 authority determines will make attendance impractical;

15 (4) is in the custody of a court or law enforcement authorities;

16 (5) is temporarily ill or injured;

17 (6) has been suspended or expelled under AS 14.03.160 or suspended  
18 or denied admittance under AS 14.30.045;

19 (7) resides more than two miles from either a public school or a route  
20 on which transportation is provided by the school authorities, except that this  
21 paragraph does not apply if the child resides within two miles of a federal or private  
22 school that the child is eligible and able to attend;

23 (8) is excused by action of the school board of the district at a regular  
24 meeting or by the district superintendent subject to approval by the school board of the  
25 district at the next regular meeting;

26 (9) has completed the 12th grade;

27 (10) is enrolled in

28 (A) a state boarding school established under AS 14.16; or

29 (B) a full-time program of correspondence study approved by  
30 the department; in those school districts providing an approved correspondence  
31 study program, a student may be enrolled either in the district correspondence

1 program or in the centralized correspondence study program;

2 (11) is equally well-served by an educational experience approved by  
3 the school board as serving the child's educational interests despite an absence from  
4 school, and the request for excuse is made in writing by the child's parents or guardian  
5 and approved by the principal or administrator of the school that the child attends;

6 (12) is being educated in the child's home by a parent or legal  
7 guardian;

8 **(13) is excused by the principal of the school in which the child is**  
9 **enrolled; a principal may excuse a child's absence, late arrival, or early**  
10 **departure from school if the excused absence, late arrival, or early departure**

11 **(A) does not interfere with the child's progress at school;**

12 **and**

13 **(B) is consistent with the definition of "excused absence,"**  
14 **"excused late arrival," or "excused early departure" adopted by the**  
15 **school district under AS 14.30.030(b)(4).**

16 \* Sec. 3. AS 14.30.010 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

17 (d) A parent, guardian, or other person having the responsibility for or control  
18 of a child between seven and 16 years of age who is a runaway or missing minor is not  
19 required to maintain the child in attendance at a public school if the parent, guardian,  
20 or other person having the responsibility for or control of the runaway or missing  
21 minor has made a report to a law enforcement agency, as authorized by  
22 AS 47.10.141(a), that the minor has run away or is missing. In this subsection,  
23 "runaway or missing minor" means a minor who a parent, guardian, or other person  
24 having the responsibility for or control of the minor reasonably believes is absent from  
25 the minor's residence for the purpose of evading a parent, guardian, or other person  
26 having the responsibility for or control of the minor, or who is otherwise missing from  
27 the minor's usual place of abode without the consent of the parent, guardian, or other  
28 person having the responsibility for or control of the minor.

29 \* Sec. 4. AS 14.30.020 is repealed and reenacted to read:

30 **Sec. 14.30.020. Violations.** (a) A person who knowingly fails to comply with  
31 AS 14.30.010 is guilty of a violation.

1 (b) A separate violation under AS 14.30.010 consists of

2 (1) each 10 days of unexcused absence, as defined by the school  
3 district under AS 14.30.030(b)(4); or

4 (2) each 14 days of unexcused late arrival or unexcused early  
5 departure, as defined by the school district under AS 14.30.030(b)(4).

6 \* Sec. 5. AS 14.30.030 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

7 (b) The procedures established under (a) of this section must include

8 (1) a specified time period in which the student shall be counted as  
9 absent from a class or a day in session or counted as a late arrival to or early departure  
10 from a class or day in session;

11 (2) a system for disseminating information related to truancy and  
12 punctuality to each student enrolled in a public school in the school district and to each  
13 parent or guardian of the student;

14 (3) a system of record keeping for truanancies, unexcused late arrivals,  
15 and unexcused early departures in the school district and a system for reporting  
16 violations under AS 14.30.020 to the student, each parent of the student or the  
17 guardian of the student, the superintendent of the school district, and the Department  
18 of Revenue; the report to the Department of Revenue must include the name and  
19 address of each parent or the guardian of the student who is in violation of  
20 AS 14.30.020; and

21 (4) definitions of the terms "excused absence," "unexcused absence,"  
22 "excused late arrival," "unexcused late arrival," "excused early departure," and  
23 "unexcused early departure"; the definitions may include the absence, late arrival, or  
24 early departure from school and from a class in which the student is enrolled at the  
25 school.

26 \* Sec. 6. AS 43.23.005(g) is amended to read:

27 (g) For purposes of applying (d)(1), (i), and (j) of this section, the date the  
28 court imposes a sentence or suspends the imposition of sentence shall be treated as the  
29 date of conviction. For purposes of applying (d)(2)(B) of this section, multiple  
30 convictions arising out of a single criminal episode shall be treated as a single  
31 conviction.

1 \* Sec. 7. AS 43.23.005 is amended by adding new subsections to read:

2 (i) Notwithstanding the provisions of (a) - (c) of this section, an individual is  
3 not eligible for a permanent fund dividend for a dividend year when, during the  
4 qualifying year,

5 (1) the individual

6 (A) is a person required under AS 14.30.010 to be enrolled in  
7 school and is 12 years of age or older;

8 (B) was adjudicated delinquent in this state for violating  
9 compulsory school attendance requirements under AS 14.30.020; and

10 (C) was not homeless on the date of the violation; as used in  
11 this subparagraph, "homeless" means lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate  
12 nighttime residence; or

13 (2) the individual was expelled from a public elementary or secondary  
14 school.

15 (j) Notwithstanding the provisions of (a) - (c) of this section, an individual is  
16 not eligible for a permanent fund dividend for a dividend year when, during the  
17 qualifying year, the individual is a parent, legal guardian, or person having  
18 responsibility for a child who is otherwise required under AS 14.30.010 to enroll in  
19 school and the child

20 (1) is less than 12 years of age and the individual was sentenced as a  
21 result of conviction relating to the child of violating, or the individual's child was  
22 adjudicated delinquent or otherwise found guilty of violating, the compulsory school  
23 attendance requirements under AS 14.30.020; or

24 (2) was expelled from a public elementary or secondary school.

25 \* Sec. 8. AS 43.23.028(a) is amended to read:

26 (a) By October 1 of each year, the commissioner shall give public notice of  
27 the value of each permanent fund dividend for that year and notice of the information  
28 required to be disclosed under (3) of this subsection. In addition, the stub attached to  
29 each individual dividend disbursement advice must

30 (1) disclose the amount of each dividend attributable to income earned  
31 by the permanent fund from deposits to that fund required under art. IX, sec. 15,

1 Constitution of the State of Alaska;

2 (2) disclose the amount of each dividend attributable to income earned  
3 by the permanent fund from appropriations to that fund and from amounts added to  
4 that fund to offset the effects of inflation;

5 (3) disclose the amount by which each dividend has been reduced due  
6 to each appropriation from the dividend fund, including amounts to pay the costs of  
7 administering the dividend program and the hold harmless provisions of  
8 AS 43.23.075;

9 (4) include a statement that an individual is not eligible for a dividend  
10 when,

11 (A) during the qualifying year, the individual was convicted of  
12 a felony;

13 (B) during all or part of the qualifying year, the individual was  
14 incarcerated as a result of the conviction of a

15 (i) felony; or

16 (ii) misdemeanor if the individual has been convicted of  
17 a prior felony or two or more prior misdemeanors;

18 **(C) during the qualifying year, the individual is a child who**  
19 **is disqualified under AS 43.23.005(i);**

20 **(D) during the qualifying year, the individual was a parent,**  
21 **guardian, or person having responsibility for a child and the individual is**  
22 **disqualified under AS 43.23.005(i);**

23 (5) include a statement that the legislative purpose for making  
24 individuals listed under **4(A) and (B)** [(4)] of this subsection ineligible is to

25 (A) obtain reimbursement for some of the costs imposed on the  
26 state criminal justice system related to incarceration or probation of those  
27 individuals;

28 (B) provide funds for services for and payments to crime  
29 victims and for grants for the operation of domestic violence and sexual assault  
30 programs;

31 (6) disclose the total amount that would have been paid during the

1 previous fiscal year to individuals who were ineligible to receive dividends under  
2 AS 43.23.005(d) if they had been eligible;

3 (7) disclose the total amount appropriated for the current fiscal year  
4 under (b) of this section for each of the funds and agencies listed in (b) of this section.

5 \* **Sec. 9.** The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to  
6 read:

7 **APPLICABILITY.** The amendments to AS 43.23.005 made by secs. 6 and 7 of this  
8 Act apply only to individuals

9 (1) convicted of, or adjudicated delinquent for, violating AS 14.30.010, as  
10 amended by secs. 1 - 3 of this Act, after December 31, 2006, except that a conviction or  
11 adjudication before December 31, 2006, may disqualify a parent, legal guardian, or person  
12 having responsibility for a child under AS 43.23.005(j), added by sec. 7 of this Act, if a  
13 subsequent conviction or adjudication occurs after December 31, 2006; or

14 (2) expelled from a public elementary or secondary school, or a person who  
15 has the responsibility for a child who is expelled from a public elementary or secondary  
16 school, after December 31, 2006.

17 \* **Sec. 10.** Section 8 of this Act takes effect January 1, 2007.

# LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH REPORT

DECEMBER 14, 2004



REPORT NUMBER 05.057

## STUDENT TRUANCY POLICIES IN SELECTED SCHOOL DISTRICTS

PREPARED FOR SENATOR GRETCHEN GUESS

BY CHERIE NIENHUIS, LEGISLATIVE ANALYST

TABLE 1: REPORTED TRUANCIES, BY SCHOOL DISTRICT, SCHOOL YEARS 2002-2003 AND 2003-2004 ..... 3

    Anchorage School District ..... 4

    Fairbanks North Star Borough School District ..... 5

    Kenai Peninsula Borough School District ..... 6

    Juneau School District ..... 7

LIST OF ATTACHMENTS ..... 8

You asked about school district policies that address student truancy. Specifically, you requested that we determine whether school districts—in practice—charge parents (or other legal guardians) or students with truancy violations.

As you know, AS 14.30.010 – 030 address compulsory school attendance for children between the ages of seven and sixteen. Pursuant to AS 14.30.010(a), it is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to maintain attendance for such children. A person knowingly failing to comply with these attendance requirements is guilty of a violation, per Alaska Statutes 14.30.020.

According to Todd Brocious, Education Specialist, Safe and Drug Free Schools Program, neither the Legislature nor the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) have defined "truancy," nor has a statewide determination been made as to when a student is considered "truant" under state law. School districts are responsible for establishing procedures to prevent and reduce truancy, but they do so at the local level, and generally without direction or intervention from the state. Mr. Brocious indicates that the No Child Left Behind Act also

addresses truancy, requiring school districts to have policies in place. Other than those provisions, DEED officials know little about school district truancy policies, and have only recently begun collecting data on the number of truanancies statewide.<sup>1</sup>

Table 1 shows truanancies and other related incidents as reported by school district for school years 2002-2003 and 2003-2004. Officials at DEED caution that because the information is self-reported by school districts, it may contain inconsistencies and inaccuracies. They are fairly certain, however, that all school districts submitted reports. Accordingly, those school districts not appearing on Table 1 did not fail to submit reports; they presumably had no truanancies to report.

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<sup>1</sup> Todd Brocius, Education Specialist, DEED, can be reached at (907) 465-2825.

**Table 1: Reported Truancies, by School District,  
School Years 2002-2003 and 2003-2004**

School District	2002-2003		2003-2004	
	Truancy	Truancy in Combination with Other Incident*	Truancy	Truancy in Combination with Other Incident*
Alaska Gateway School District	6		65	
Anchorage School District	605		396	
Bering Strait School District	0		15	
Chugach School District	0		8	
Craig City School District	0		1	
Chatham School District	14		0	
Delta/Greely School District	8		1	
Dillingham City School District	0		2	16
Fairbanks North Star Borough School District	348		449	
Galena City School District	0		1	
Hoonah City School District	0		2	
Iditarod Area School District	0		1	
Juneau Borough School District	11		67	
Kake City School District	4		3	
Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District	29		12	
Klawock City School District	34		32	6
Kodiak Island Borough School District	10		34	
Kuspuk School District	11		0	
Lake and Peninsula Borough School District	0		6	3
Lower Yukon School District	4		33	
Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District	381		216	
Nenana City School District	10		0	
Nome City School District	34		0	
North Slope Borough School District	0		413	
Northwest Arctic Borough School District	2		8	10
Petersburg City School District	0		14	
Saint Mary's School District	4		0	
Sitka Borough School District	14		22	
Southwest Region School District	0		2	
Tanana School District	1		0	
Valdez City School District	2		1	
Yakutat City School District	15		3	
Yukon Flats School District	1		1	
Yukon/Koyukuk School District	1	7	19	20
Yupit School District	3		7	
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1552</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1834</b>	<b>55</b>

**Notes:** \*Other incidents include disorderly conduct, fighting, insubordination, profanity, and tobacco use. Because this information is self-reported by the districts, the Department of Education and Early Development advises caution when using these data. School districts not included in the list are presumed to have no reportable truancies.

**Source:** Cynthia Scott, Education Associate, DEED, (907) 465-2304

According to DEED, how to address truancy violations is a local decision, and the school districts we reviewed had somewhat varied policies on the subject. In addition, we found that while school districts will occasionally set forth a broad truancy policy, individual schools are often allowed flexibility to adapt and modify the policy to suit given needs. Anchorage School District personnel with whom we spoke described to us a very loose and flexible truancy policy, we found this to be inconsistent with the district's policy as published in on-line school handbooks, which appears to address truanies in a much more systematic manner. What we were told on a consistent basis, however—from each school district we contacted—is that the primary emphasis with regard to truancy is to work with students and parents to resolve truancy problems first, and apply punishment if and when no resolution can be found.

Because answers to our questions depended in large part on which school official provided them, based on our limited research, we found there to be little uniformity in the way truancy violations are addressed, even at the school district level. Although some school districts have published general attendance and truancy "policies" in on-line student handbooks, in many cases they are written in such a way as to give a significant amount of latitude to the school officials administering them. Regarding your question about whether the *student* is ever the held in violation of law for being truant rather than the parent or guardian, it appears that the answer is "yes." Both the Anchorage School District and the Juneau School District have local ordinances that allow students to be fined for truanies; the other districts we reviewed have other means to discipline students and/or their parents or guardians.

Tangentially, several of the school district officials with whom we spoke expressed frustration that the current system allows parents or guardians to pull children out of schools with no more than an explanation that they plan to homeschool their children. While acknowledging that there are some excellent, legitimate homeschools, these administrators believe that local educators should be allowed at least some oversight of these programs.

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#### ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT

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The Anchorage School District (ASD) appears to have various means of addressing truancy problems, based in part on the age of the student. Ricki Jovanovich of the ASD High School Education Department, explained that high school students may miss up to 15 days of school before they are placed on attendance probation.<sup>2</sup> She indicated that ASD middle schools have a less strict policy with regard to truancy, and may waive corrective measures if students are in "good standing" with the school. Ms. Jovanovich told us that there is no attendance policy for the ASD elementary schools.<sup>3</sup>

Gail Opalinski, Executive Director, ASD Middle School Education Department, said that prior to applying punishment, middle school administrators make numerous attempts to contact the parents to determine the cause of the attendance problem and remedy the situation. School officials will occasionally involve local police officers and the Office of Children's Services in cases of repeated truancy, especially in situations where the parents/guardians are non-

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<sup>2</sup> The allowable number of absences changes with each school according to its class schedule, whereas some schools allow 15 days of absences before attendance probation is ordered, other schools allow only 7 days.

<sup>3</sup> Ricki Jovanovich, High School Education Department, can be reached at (907) 742-4000

responsive or unavailable. If the truancy problem persists, the school district may fine the parent or guardian.

Published student/parent handbooks, available on-line for each of the high and middle schools, are more explicit. In general, attendance is mandatory and students are placed on attendance probation when they reach the school's stated maximum absences, regardless of whether the absences are excused. As for truancy—which the ASD handbook defines as "an absence from class or school without prior knowledge or consent of the parent or school personnel"—much more immediate action is taken. According to the handbook, for each confirmed truancy, a letter specifying the date(s) and period(s) of the truancy is sent to the parents, along with a warning of disciplinary action to be taken for the current and subsequent truanies.<sup>4</sup> Further disciplinary action may be taken as follows:

- 1) Student will receive a grade of "0" for any class work missed or due on the day of the truancy;
- 2) The school shall warn the student and notify the parent of further disciplinary action;
- 3) The student may be suspended for up to three days for any additional truancy;
- 4) The student may be suspended for the remainder of the grading period for truanies (which are cumulative throughout the semester) beyond those punishable by step 3 above;
- 5) The student will be designated as habitually truant after four processed truanies in a semester. After such designation, and with no further cooperation from the parent and student in remediating the situation, the habitually truant student and/or parent may be cited under Anchorage Municipal Code 8.05.445.<sup>5</sup>

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#### FAIRBANKS NORTH STAR BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Pam Hallberg, Secretary to the Superintendent, told us that the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District (FNSBSD) does not have a district-wide policy on truancy. She indicates that school principals track truancy problems and apply punishment as they see fit. If the problem persists, the school will send a letter to the student's parent or guardian notifying them of the student's lack of attendance. Ms. Hallberg notes that these letters are usually enough to remedy the problem. On occasions when further action must be taken—in approximately six to eight such cases per year—the school district will forward all pertinent information to the Borough

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<sup>4</sup> "Truancy" section of district wide General Attendance Information, ASD high school and middle school handbooks. We include this section of the Bartlett High School Handbook as Attachment A.

<sup>5</sup> According to attorneys for the Municipality of Anchorage, Anchorage Municipal Code (AMC) 8.05.445 has been renumbered to AMC 8.75.065, which we include with this report as Attachment B. You will note that AMC 8.75.065 (C) has a reference to 8.05.455—a section that is no longer part of the code. Attorneys for the Municipality are not able to explain the error.

Attorney's office for prosecution. Ms. Hallberg reports that these referrals and the resultant court hearings sometimes impel parents into compliance, but they do little to punish, with seldom a fine, imprisonment, or even probation imposed.

The FNSBSD does not publish a handbook that explains its truancy policy, nor does it employ a truancy officer. The only truancy guideline for the district is state law, Ms. Hallberg told us. We found, however, a district school board policy manual on-line with a section on attendance. With regard to disciplinary actions for excessive absenteeism, the school board expresses its preference for in-house programs to improve student attendance over suspension actions. Section 1031.5 of the School Board Policy manual states that the names of students for whom other actions to approve attendance have failed will be forwarded to the school board for consideration of initiating a truancy action against the students' parents or guardians.<sup>6</sup>

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### KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Although we did not speak directly to Kenai Peninsula Borough School District (KPBSD) personnel, we easily found their truancy policy on-line. Administrative Regulation 5115 of the policy manual clearly outlines the options available to students and parents when truanancies occur. Following notification of the student's parents, the student is referred to his or her school's intervention team for the purpose of developing strategies for resolving the truancy problem. Parents, meanwhile, are advised of the school's options for discipline, and are asked to choose among of the following:

- ◆ One or more parent must attend the class period or periods for the time the student was truant. The student will be allowed on school grounds only during school hours and will not be allowed to participate in any school activities until this "parent shadowing" is completed.
- ◆ The truant student will be assigned two hours of community service for each truant period, to be completed outside of school hours and in a timely fashion. The student will be allowed on school grounds only during school hours and will not be allowed to participate in any school activities until the service is completed.

The above options apply to first time truancy violations. Students with two or three violations will have the above options multiplied by a factor of two or three. The policy manual also states that administrators shall have the latitude to exercise other disciplinary alternatives to truancy violations, including but not limited to detention, or in-school or out-of-school suspension, if a student and/or parent fail to successfully fulfill the above stated options or if a student becomes a chronic violator.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The FNSBSD School Board Policy Manual is available on-line at <http://www.northstar.k12.ak.us/schoolboard/policy%20manual-PDFs/Policy%20PDF%20files/Policy%2010.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> KPBSD Policy Manual, Administrative Regulation 5113, we include a copy of this section of the manual as Attachment C.

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## JUNEAU SCHOOL DISTRICT

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The Juneau School District (JSD) employs a full-time truancy officer to track, manage, and follow-up on truant and excessively absent students. Bonnie Lanz's truancy officer position was originally funded with grant money, but it has since become a regular part of the school district's annual budget. Although she says that 95 percent of her job is intervention, Ms. Lanz was also instrumental in the 2003 passage of a Juneau City Ordinance establishing the "habitual truancy" offense.

After working for several years as a truancy officer, Ms. Lanz concluded that prosecution under the state law, which punishes the parent or guardian, was slow and ineffective. Especially for older middle school and high school students, Ms. Lanz found that even those parents that are actively engaged in keeping their children in school will occasionally hear from the school district that their kids have been truant. Believing that disciplinary action should make a greater impression on truant students, she proposed a plan wherein students with five or more unexcused absences would be required to go to court and face up to a \$100 fine and/or be put on probation for truancy violations. Fines and other punishment could be waived pending the student's improved attendance and grades. In May 2003, her proposal became City and Borough of Juneau Municipal Code 42.20.220; we include a copy of this ordinance as Attachment D.

Ms. Lanz reports that the law has been somewhat effective in curbing truancy for older students, and believes it should apply to students until they are 18 years of age or until they graduate, rather than until the age of 16, as the law now requires. The school district does not apply the law to elementary school children, where parents are still held directly accountable for their child's attendance. For families with shared custody, Ms. Lanz told us that the school district is usually able to determine, through various means, which party to hold accountable for the child's attendance.

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I hope you find this information to be useful. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have questions or need additional information.