



KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

Office of Superintendent

Dr. Steve Atwater, Superintendent of Schools
148 North Binkley Street Soldotna, Alaska 99669-7553
Phone (907) 714-8888 Fax (907) 262-9132

M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: September 28, 2009
TO: Members, Board of Education
FROM: Steve Atwater, Ph.D. *Steve Atwater*
Superintendent of Schools
RE: 2010 Federal and State Legislative Priorities

A worksession has been scheduled for the October 5 School Board meeting to discuss the 2010 legislative priorities. In preparation for this discussion I have attached the last two years of District priorities.

As the Borough Administration requires this list by October 16, action on the 2010 state and federal priorities is also scheduled for the October 5 meeting.

Federal priorities should stay the same as 2009 except that the Nanwalek housing has been completed.

Suggested state priorities for the 2009-2010 school year include the following:

- Create a new three-year education funding plan.
- Accept the ISER Cost Differential Study for future state education funding.
- Maintain fiscal support for the debt reimbursement program.
- Maintain newest retirement tiers as defined contribution.
- Increase the mandatory age of attendance to 18.
- Establish a new exam to determine student readiness to graduate from high school. Such an exam should replace both the current HSGQE and the soon to be required WorkKeys test.

The background rationale and wording for the final priorities would be developed by administration to be submitted to the Borough's legislative priority publication.

**Kenai Peninsula Borough School District
2009 Federal Legislative Priorities**

Fund adequate housing for teachers in Nanwalek and Tyonek

The remote Native Villages of Tyonek and Nanwalek suffer from high teacher turnover. A new duplex in Tyonek was completed in 2006 and has enhanced the District's ability to recruit and retain quality teaching staff. A second duplex is needed in Tyonek as well as a similar complex in Nanwalek. With this change from substandard housing and the expected continuity of staff, student achievement will likely be positively impacted. Work with the Denali Commission and Alaska Housing Finance Corporation on this project has been positive.

Address health care costs in the United States

In Alaska 18.2% of its residents, which is nearly 122,000 people, have no medical insurance and the price of treatment is increasing. In the U.S., over 47 million people have no health insurance. The uninsured drive costs up for everyone. For school districts in Alaska these health care costs for current and retired employees is a growing problem. In many districts, including the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District, these costs add up to more than 10% of the budget. This growing budget category mitigates districts' ability to directly impact student achievement through classroom focused expenditures.

Fully fund Federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) mandates

In order to ensure a quality education for all Alaskan students and meet the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act federal funding must be sustainable, reliable, and adequate. NCLB requirements for assessment, targeted student services, teacher and paraprofessional qualifications and services for children in transition require funding support far above current funding levels. Restrictions on transferability of funds for districts in improvement hinder the ability of these districts to effectively address identified needs therefore need to be relaxed. Less restrictive transferability regulations would allow for increased learning opportunities for struggling learners in high poverty areas and low performing student groups.

Fully fund the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

IDEA was reauthorized in 2004. Congress originally promised to fund up to 40% of the excess costs of educating students with disabilities under IDEA. Currently congress has authorized expenditures to cover approximately 17% of the excess costs nationally. The Kenai Peninsula Borough School District believes that congress should fund the full amount they originally promised. To do otherwise requires local districts to reduce funding for general instructional needs to meet the needs of special student populations. This results in another under-funded mandate passed down to state and local governments.

Funding early learning programs in Alaska

All children should have opportunities to learn during the formative early childhood years. Studies show that for every \$1 spent in early childhood education, \$8 is saved in later services that are not necessary. Many of Alaska's children are placed at risk for future school failure because they do not have access to rich learning opportunities. Funding for voluntary programs for four and five year olds should be provided.

**Kenai Peninsula Borough School District
2009 State Legislative Priorities**

The Kenai Peninsula Borough School District calls on the Alaska State Legislature to recognize that children are the first priority, by:

Fully implementing Area Cost Differential and Intensive Needs funding in the foundation formula for FY10

The Legislative Task Force recognized the need for additional funding for the inadequacies of current cost differentials acknowledging the higher cost of doing business in a District with remote and rural sites as well as the inadequacy of current funding for Intensive Needs students. Rather than phase in the changes, immediately implement the full ACD and Intensive Needs funding to eliminate inequities still present and provide funding for services currently being provided.

Providing sustained, reliable and adequate educational funding for Alaska's students

Education funding with increases necessary to sustain current programs and promising new programs should not be a year to year problem. By providing forward funding, with annual increases to the Base Student Allocation (BSA) each year, districts can better plan for meeting their student needs. Taking advantage of the opportunity presented by the current budget surplus to substantially increase the BSA would make a positive difference for districts, specifically in the areas of decreased class sizes, increased opportunities for electives, and additional support for students.

Addressing huge energy costs to school district through increased or supplemental funding

Higher fuel prices are facing individuals, communities and schools. Increases in energy costs directly impact available revenue for school programs. Conservation programs and maintenance efforts have been put in place to help with these costs but will not address the huge increases. Relief for high energy costs needs to be provided to school districts.

Funding early learning programs in Alaska

All children should have opportunities to learn during the formative early childhood years. Studies show that for every \$1 spent in early childhood education, \$8 is saved in later services that are not necessary. Many of Alaska's children are placed at risk for future school failure because they do not have access to rich learning opportunities. Funding for voluntary programs for four and five year olds should be provided.

Provide support for additional workforce development courses and career and technical needs

The implementation of vocational programs inevitably results in additional expenses that are beyond the standard revenue available in school district. An educated and skilled workforce is a key to economic vitality. Funding for career and technical education and training, especially at the middle and high school levels, would begin to address the anticipated gap in workers for Alaska jobs.

Addressing health care costs in Alaska

In Alaska, more than 110,000 residents have no medical insurance and the price of treatment is increasing. The uninsured drive costs up for everyone. The health care costs for the district are approximately 10% of the budget; all indications are that this is a growing cost of doing business. The recommendation is that legislative should be enacted that would provide for a statewide plan in which public entities may participate.

Providing accountability for all school-age children of the state

Having a choice of an educational delivery system is important to Alaskans. However, all children have a right to be safe and receive an education. A registration and educational accountability system for school age children will help protect the rights of those least able to care for themselves.

Kenai Peninsula Borough School District 2008 Federal Legislative Priorities

Fund adequate housing for teachers in Nanwalek and Tyonek

The remote Native Villages of Tyonek and Nanwalek suffer from high teacher turnover. A new duplex in Tyonek was built last year and has enhanced the District's ability to recruit and retain quality teaching staff. A second duplex is needed in Tyonek as well as a similar complex in Nanwalek. With this change from substandard housing and the expected continuity of staff, student achievement will likely be positively impacted. Work with the Denali Commission on this project has been positive.

Address health care costs in the United States

In Alaska more than 110,000 residents have no medical insurance and the price of treatment is increasing. In the U.S. 47 million people have no health insurance. The uninsured drive costs up for everyone. For school districts in Alaska these health care costs for current and retired employees is a growing problem. In many districts these costs add up to more than 10% of the budget. In the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District health care costs comprise approximately 10% of the budget. This growing budget category mitigates districts' ability to directly impact student achievement through classroom focused expenditures.

Fully fund Federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) mandates

In order to ensure a quality education for all Alaskan students and meet the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act federal funding must be sustainable, reliable, and adequate. NCLB requirements for assessment, targeted student services, teacher and paraprofessional qualifications and services for children in transition require funding support far above current funding levels. Restrictions on transferability of funds for districts in improvement hinder the ability of these districts to effectively address identified needs therefore need to be relaxed. Less restrictive transferability regulations would allow for increased learning opportunities for struggling learners in high poverty areas and low performing student groups.

Fully fund the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

IDEA was reauthorized in 2004. Congress originally promised to fund up to 40% of the excess costs of educating students with disabilities under IDEA. Currently congress has authorized expenditures to cover just less than 18% of the excess costs nationally. The Kenai Peninsula Borough School District believes that congress should fund the full amount they originally promised. To do otherwise requires local districts to reduce funding for general instructional needs to meet the needs of special student populations. This results in another under-funded mandate passed down to state and local governments.

Develop East End Road from Homer to top of hill above Kachemak Selo

The East End Road provides access to three Russian Villages: Razdolna, Voznesenka and Kachemak Selo. State road maintenance ends at the end of the pavement at mile 20.5. The remaining portion of the road is a two mile long, very steep, gravel road, ending at the Kachemak Bay bluffs. This road has a very poor sub-base with a silty gravel cap. There are several annual frost heaves and significant hills and curves with very little platted right-of-way. Borough Road Service Area maintenance extends two miles, from the end of the pavement to the bluff.

This project is intended to plat the road in a more favorable location, reduce the hills, improve drainage, and add an appropriate gravel surface. Repairs to the road will allow school buses to use the road, improve emergency vehicle access, and protect the safety and well being of the KPBSD staff members and community members who travel this road on a daily basis.

**Kenai Peninsula Borough School District
2008 State Legislative Priorities**

The Kenai Peninsula Borough School District calls on the Alaska State Legislature to recognize **that children are the first priority**, by:

Implementing, at a minimum, the Recommendations Included in the Joint Legislative Education Funding Task Force Report

The Joint Legislative Education Funding Task Force was created by the legislature to debate the merits of various changes to the education funding formula. As a result of their work the Task Force prepared a report to the state legislature and the governor which will improve public education in Alaska and provide school districts with a more equitable and stable funding scheme. Compromises were made during the creation of the report to reach a generally acceptable consensus. The Kenai Peninsula Borough School District Board of Education supports the recommendations of the Task Force; but recognizes the costs of delivering education exceed the recommendations. Therefore the following solution is proposed:

- The passing by the Legislature of SB 125 (PERS/TRS cost sharing) in substantially the same form as it currently exists;
- The creation of standing Education Committees in the House and Senate to oversee and review all education issues in the state;
- The referral to the Education Committees of the various long-term issues discussed in the Task Force report;
- The implementation of the ISER district cost factors, phased in to statute over three years
- The three-year phased increases in the intensive need funding with those increases set into statute;
- The recalibration of the transportation reimbursement rate based on the most recent actual audited costs; and
- An increasing Base Student Allocation amount set in statute for fiscal years 2009, 2010, and 2011, at an amount that will keep pace with projected cost increases over those years.