

AASB Resolutions Discussion Paper  
Aug. 3, 2010

Dear Alaska School Board member,

This document is intended for use with “Where We Stand,” the AASB Belief Statements and Core Resolutions for 2010. Various changes proposed by the AASB Board of Directors are explained in this discussion paper.

By way of background, the member districts of AASB have approved 106 resolutions on a wide range of state and federal education issues. The resolutions give AASB directors and staff guidance in working with state and federal policy-makers on behalf of Alaska’s public schools and our children.

For the 2010 Annual Conference on Nov. 11-14, the AASB Board has proposed two new resolutions: 2.35 relating to state funding for school meals and 5.16 supporting a review of the exit exam for high school graduates. The resolutions explain themselves in large part, but background might be helpful to you:

**Resolve 2.35 Supporting State Funding for School Meals**

In the 2010 Alaska Legislature, SB 213 gained wide support but failed to win final passage. SB 213 sought to provide approximately \$2.5 million a year to districts, on a formula basis, in support of school meals. The base support established in the bill was 35 cents for each breakfast and 15 cents for each lunch. The base amounts were to be adjusted upward by the Anchorage CPI each year.

The AASB Board of Directors recommends adoption of Resolve 2.35. Language in the draft resolution was taken in large part from Resolution 09-10-2 adopted by the Kenai Peninsula Borough Board of Education in February 2010.

**Resolve 5.16 Exit Exam**

The State Board of Education has debated the effectiveness of the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam and declined to recommend any immediate changes. The Department of Education & Early Development has examined the use of the WorkKeys assessments as a possible replacement for the exit exam, but the two are so different it doesn’t appear to be feasible.

In the 2010 Alaska Legislature, the House and Senate Education Committees held several hearings on whether to repeal the requirement for an exit exam. Sen. Bettye Davis, D-Anchorage, was the strongest advocate for repealing it. SB 109, sponsored by Davis, passed two committees in the Senate but ultimately died in the Senate Finance Committee.

The AASB Board of Directors recommends adoption of Resolve 5.16. Language in the resolution was provided by AASB staff.

### Amendments to existing resolutions

#### **1.7 School Improvement and Student Achievement**

The AASB Board recommends adoption of the amendments. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is more accurately called the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). NCLB is the set of amendments enacted to ESEA in 2001. The amendments require that the ESEA be reauthorized by Congress, a process that is underway now and the subject of “Blueprint” recommendations from the U.S. Department of Education.

In response to that Blueprint, AASB has recommended to Congress that ESEA be amended to allow an extended period of student assessments, say three years, to allow a more accurate picture of achievement. The Blueprint lays out a plan for states to compete for federal educational grants; AASB recommends that districts with few administrative staff not be penalized in that competition. Other amendments recommended by AASB are reflected in the bold, underlined language in Resolution 1.7.

#### **2.2 Urging the Legislature to increase the 20 percent block grant for Special Needs**

The change from “true” to “full” is a more accurate adjective. The AASB Board recommends adoption of this amendment.

#### **2.2(a) Fully implement increases to the District Cost Factor and Intensive Needs Sections of the Foundation Formula and begin immediate review of the District Cost Factors**

Effective July 1, 2010, the three-year phased increase in Intensive Needs formula funding approved by the Legislature in 2008 was fully implemented at 13 times the Base Student Allocation. The five-year phase-in of the District Cost Factor increase will not be fully implemented until July 1, 2012. The deletions, or ~~cross-throughs~~, in the amendments to this resolution reflect those facts.

The AASB Board recommends adoption of these amendments.

#### **2.3 Urging consideration of issues identified by the Joint Legislative Education Funding Task Force**

The Special Needs block grant (Issue #2) is addressed in AASB Resolve 2.2. The 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> Alaska Legislatures provided assurances of state K-12 school funding in advance of the spring budget cycle used by most Alaska school boards. (Issue #6).

The National Forest Receipts Program (Issue #10) is more generally known as the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act. It is due to expire in September 2011.

The AASB Board recommends adoption of these amendments.

## **2.8 Following the Capital Improvement Project priority lists for non-bonded projects**

This amendment reflects the passage of SB 237 in 2010. SB 237 creates a pool of funding up to \$70 million a year for rural school construction. The bill also suspends indefinitely the sunset date on local school debt reimbursements by the state (see Resolution 2.12). The AASB Board recommends adoption of this amendment.

## **2.11 Instructional Technology**

The amendments more clearly spell out our request for support of the Consortium for Digital Learning and the E-rate program. The AASB Board recommends adoption of these amendments.

## **2.12 School Construction Debt Retirement for bonded indebtedness**

See discussion of Resolution 2.8 above. The AASB Board recommends adoption of this amendment.

## **2.20 Legislative Financial Relief for ongoing TRS and PERS Employer Rate Increases**

The State of Alaska sued Mercer Human Resources Consulting, now known simply as Mercer, over the company's performance in providing financial advise to the state retirement system. The company settled with the state in June, 2010, for a reported sum of \$500 million. After deducting court costs and attorney fees, the amount to be deposited in the PERS/TRS system is about \$403 million.

The AASB Board recommends adoption of this amendment.

## **2.24 Forward Funding of Schools**

The amendment specifies the twin actions – an appropriation and a change to the BSA – that school boards need to make efficient and intelligent budget decisions each spring. The AASB Board recommends adoption of this amendment.

## **4.11 School Performance Incentive Program**

The amendment reflects the end of the state's three-year pilot program of the same name. The AASB Board recommends adoption.

## **5.10 Urging flexibility in testing regimes to support indigenous language programs**

Changes make resolution conform to proper title for the federal education law. AASB Board recommends adoption.

AASB resolutions undergo a sunset review process five years after adoption. The following resolutions are scheduled to sunset in November 2010 unless extended by a vote of the membership:

- 2.22 Energy costs
- 3.17 Student wellness
- 3.18 Early Childhood brain development
- 4.4 Mentor project
- 4.8 Defined benefits retirement program
- 4.9 Health Care reform
- 4.10 Facilitated services by electronic means

The AASB Board recommends all resolutions except 4.8 (defined benefits) 4.9 (health care) be renewed and extended for five years. The AASB Board recommends that 4.8 be amended, but did not offer language to that end. With passage of the health care reform law by Congress in 2010, Resolve 4.9 has been addressed. The AASB Board recommends that 4.9 be allowed to sunset.



# WHERE WE STAND

*Draft AASB Belief Statements and Core Resolutions with amendments proposed  
by the Board of Directors for membership consideration on Aug. 3, 2010*

(Please submit proposed amendments and new resolutions by Oct. 1, 2010)

(~~Cross-through~~ indicates language deleted; **bold underlined** indicates language added)

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# **AASB Mission Statement**

The mission of AASB is to advocate for children and youth by assisting school boards in providing quality public education, focused on student achievement, through effective local governance.

## **Belief Statements**

Belief Statements are brief philosophical statements about issues the AASB membership believes to be true. They are distinguished from Resolutions in that they are longstanding, universally accepted statements that require no specific action yet underpin the beliefs of the association.

### **GOVERNANCE**

#### **B.1 LOCAL GOVERNANCE**

Public education is the responsibility of the states and of the local school boards created by those states. This system of local school board governance is one of the purest examples of democracy in action today in that school boards, as locally elected representatives, are held accountable for public education by the public they serve as locally elected representatives. The mission of the Association of Alaska School Boards is to advocate for children and youth by assisting school boards in providing students with quality public education, focused on student achievement through effective local governance. *Amended 2003, 2007, 2009*

#### **B.2 BINDING ARBITRATION**

Binding arbitration removes decision making from locally elected school boards and puts it in the hands of an outside entity, and allows a third party to determine the salaries, benefits and working conditions of school district employees who bargain collectively. It is the elected school board's responsibility to weigh the consequences of decisions concerning management of school resources. The Association of Alaska School Boards opposes any legislation that provides for binding arbitration as the final step in collective bargaining.

#### **B.3 ADVISORY BOARD TRAINING**

State law requires the establishment of advisory school boards in REAA's and allows them in city and borough school districts. School boards have delegated authority and responsibility to those advisory school boards, and are encouraged to provide in-service opportunities and training to local advisory boards to help them become effective contributors to excellence in education in their communities.

#### **B.4 SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER TRAINING**

School board members are elected by their local school district citizens based on minimum statewide requirements of eligibility to vote and residency. They are responsible to the public for policy issues and budgets of millions of dollars and are coming under increasing public scrutiny. The Association of Alaska School Boards strongly encourages all school board members to avail themselves of training opportunities to increase their understanding of the issues confronting their district, to improve their ability to make the decisions required of them and to demonstrate their accountability to the public.

## **B.5 CLASS SIZE**

AASB opposes any legislative mandating of class size or making class size a negotiable item of bargaining. The Alaska Supreme Court has held that class size is not a mandatory subject of collective bargaining. While school boards recognize the advantage of small class size, they must be able to use discretion when weighing the cost of reduced class sizes with other financial obligations and educational needs of a district. Making class size a mandatory subject of collective bargaining might make class size subject to grievance binding arbitration or otherwise diminish board control over staffing levels. Legislative mandates similarly infringe on the discretion of local decision-makers. *Amended 2009*

## **FUNDING**

### **B.6 EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND FUNDING AS TOP PRIORITY**

Article VII, Sec. 1 of the Alaska State Constitution states that the Legislature shall establish and maintain a system of public schools open to all school age children. Public education is fundamental to democracy and economic advancement of the state. AASB calls upon the Governor and the Alaska Legislature to make sustainable, adequate and equitable funding a top priority for the exemplary education of our youth. *Amended 2003, 2005, 2006, 2008*

### **B.7 UNFUNDED MANDATES**

Schools have been inundated with statutes, regulations and court decisions that require additional services without accompanying appropriations. With inflation eroding purchasing power and increased expectations for services, schools are forced to respond with decreased resources. AASB encourages all policy makers to take responsibility for their mandates by fully funding or removing them. *Amended 1999*

### **B.8 MEETING SCHOOL FACILITY NEEDS FOR ALASKA STUDENTS**

AASB believes that the Alaska State Legislature and the Governor must address the continuing need for appropriate school facilities and major school maintenance. *Amended 1998, 2002, 2006, 2009*

## **CHILD ADVOCACY**

### **Preamble**

As community leaders committed to education and the equal opportunity for each resident to achieve his/her potential, **we** act on behalf of all children for the good of the community; and **we** act on behalf of each child. **We** accept our responsibility and its challenge of finding viable and relevant solutions to the myriad of problems facing children today. **We** believe that it takes a whole community to educate a child. **We** encourage the legislature, tribal governments, agencies, organizations, businesses, communities, congregations, extended families, **and** parents and guardians to willfully commit to the development of each child. Together **we** will identify and clearly articulate the needs of our children, and together **we** will implement effective solutions and achieve measurable results. Together, **we** will share in the rewards that an emotionally healthy, educated, and vital citizenry will contribute to the future of Alaska. To fulfill our role in the shared responsibility of educating children, **we** are resolved to pursue the following resolutions. *Amended 2002, 2006, 2007, 2009*

### **B.9 CHILD ADVOCACY MISSION STATEMENT**

The advocacy role of school board members is to promote parental, public and social service commitment to the shared responsibility of educating all children and youth in public education. *Amended 1998*

### **B.10 LANGUAGE, CULTURAL AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY**

Alaska is a vast state and is populated by persons of diverse cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds. Our schools must provide an environment that respects the ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity of the student populations. Furthermore, AASB believes that schools must make every effort to support programs that encourage learning and valuing diverse cultures. In doing so, AASB encourages tolerance and pride without isolating or alienating a particular group. *Amended 1998, 2007*

**B.11 INCREASE IN FAMILY AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLS & EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS**

AASB believes, and research supports the belief, that one of the most important factors in student achievement is parental, family and guardian involvement in the educational process, both at home and in the schools. AASB feels that family involvement in the education of children is the highest priority and strongly encourages school districts to initiate contact with families in a culturally responsive way. *Amended 2003, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009*

**B.12 SUPPORTING SOBRIETY**

AASB encourages our students and parents to help in overcoming our communities' affliction with alcohol and drugs. AASB supports efforts of schools and communities to become and remain alcohol and drug free through activities that: encourage the formation of sobriety groups in every Alaska community; encourage the practice of healthy lifestyles, values and activities; support existing groups working to promote sobriety; and encourage and support sober role models. *Amended 2007*

**B.13 PREVENTION/EARLY INTERVENTION**

AASB believes in the prevention aspects of health and social service programs. Prevention is cost effective, both in dollars and in reducing human suffering. Many of the social and health problems we are experiencing now will only continue to grow if effective prevention/intervention programs are not in place. AASB supports early identification of and intervention for children at risk and inclusion of parents and guardians and community partners in prevention and intervention services. *Amended 2002, 2006, 2008*

**B.14 PROHIBITING PERSONS CONVICTED OF SEXUAL ABUSE FROM SERVING ON SCHOOL BOARDS**

School board members should serve as role models for students and staff. AASB believes that persons convicted of sexual abuse should be legally prohibited from serving on a school board or REAA school advisory boards. *Amended 1998, 2007, 2008*

**B.15 DECLARING CHILDREN THE TOP PRIORITY OF ALASKA**

AASB believes children are the top priority of our state. This declaration extends to the safety, health, education and future of our children. *Adopted 2005, Amended 2006, 2008*

**PERSONNEL**

**B.16 ALASKA NATIVE TEACHER HIRE & RETENTION**

Studies have shown that Native teachers have had a very positive effect on Native students. The hiring and retention of qualified Alaska Native teachers has long been supported by educational and Native organizations. AASB strongly urges school districts to recruit qualified Native teachers. The University of Alaska is encouraged to more actively recruit Native students. Local school districts, with the help of the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, are encouraged to provide leadership in developing programs to encourage Native students to choose education as a field of study, and to make every effort to foster the hiring and retention of Native teacher aides and teachers.

**B. 16(a) QUALITY STAFF IMPROVES STUDENT LEARNING**

High-quality, highly motivated and innovative teachers, administrators and other staff are essential for a successful school that maximizes student learning.

## **EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

### **B.17 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

All children should have opportunities to learn during the formative early childhood years. Many of Alaska's young children are placed at risk for future school failure because they do not have access to rich learning opportunities for a variety of reasons. The Association of Alaska School Boards therefore supports and encourages districts and/or communities to develop early childhood programs which include a parent and family involvement component. *Amended 1998, 2007*

### **B.18 EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT**

AASB believes the elements of a quality educational improvement effort should address the following five key areas:

- **Parental Involvement:** Should encourage a high degree of parental involvement in all aspects of their child's education; collaboration on societal issues outside schools that impact children's learning (schools and various agencies must collaboratively plan to provide services to children to effectively meet their needs); and accountability to the public to assure desired results – a "world class" education.
- **Community engagement:** Should involve many different sectors of the community in the schools to broaden the experience afforded students and promote the shared responsibility of adults in our communities in supporting Alaska's youth to achieve academic success, engage in positive, thriving behaviors and reduce unhealthy behaviors.
- **Student Standards:** Should include the development of educational programs to meet high standards and identified competencies (they should be delivered by a variety of means that meet the diverse needs of students and prepare them to be contributing and productive citizens in a rapidly changing world).
- **Professional Standards:** Should include the highest standards of professionalism by school employees throughout the district.
- **Accreditation Standards:** Adequate and appropriate space, furnishings, equipment and technology; adequate and equitable funding that will allow for the most effective planning and use of each educational dollar; and an early childhood education program. *Amended 1998*

### **B.19 CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY**

The strength of our democracy rests in large part on the success of our public schools in educating all young Alaskans in a deep understanding of the history of our democracy, its evolving governmental principles and structure, and the importance of citizenship and civic responsibility from the local through the national level. These lessons should begin in primary grades and continue through all the school years. Lessons should be appropriate to the age of the child, but should, in total, provide strong grounding for fully informed and involved citizenship. It is the duty of each generation to teach the next how democracy works. *Adopted 2008*

# AASB CORE RESOLUTIONS

## GOVERNANCE

### 1.1 PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Association of Alaska School Boards encourages each school board to incorporate the Pledge of Allegiance to our nation's flag in a manner that it sees fit as a regular part of each district's daily activities. AASB further urges that every effort be made to inform students of the true meaning of this pledge to deepen their interest and understanding of citizenship and civic responsibility in a democratic society.

**Rationale.** Public education is the cornerstone of our democracy. School board service, at its core, is one of the most purely democratic institutions in America today. The Pledge of Allegiance is an important civics lesson, recited every day across the nation by school children. *Adopted 2002, (Sunset Nov. 2012)*

### 1.2 OPPOSING MANDATED SCHOOL CONSOLIDATION

AASB is opposed to mandated school consolidation because it will greatly reduce local control for a significant number of school districts in Alaska.

**Rationale.** In 2004 the Alaska Local Boundary Commission (LBC) and Department of Education & Early Development (EED) completed a report, which suggests only marginal savings by consolidation of school districts. AASB continues to seek and engage in cooperative and shared service opportunities, thereby creating a significant savings of state tax dollars for all involved.

The concept of cooperation and shared services, as an alternative to mandated consolidation, ensures local autonomy and decision-making is preserved. AS.14.14.115 provides a grant program that encourages the sharing of services to recognize cost economies. Some communities and school districts have considered it viable to consolidate, and have done so through their own volition as a local decision. Others currently participate in shared administrative services, including purchasing and other business functions, and should be applauded and encouraged in their efforts to achieve efficiencies.

No evidence has been provided to support the proposition that significant savings or improved student learning would result from the indiscriminate combining of school districts. Studies on school consolidation imply an imperceptible savings. Public perception may be different. School boards are encouraged to involve the public more thoroughly in efforts to explain their budget and to seek input throughout the budgeting process. *Amended 1999 & 2003 (Sunset Nov. 2013)*

### 1.3 OPPOSITION TO MANDATED BOROUGH FORMATION

AASB continues to oppose mandatory formation of boroughs. A mandatory borough act reduces the current level of local responsibility and control by encouraging the elimination of small REAA districts and small city districts, and would also reduce the level of local control of education, as it exists today.

**Rationale.** Local communities may differ in their values and the priorities associated with the delivery of educational services.

A mandatory borough act ignores the economic reality of the lack of an adequate tax base in some rural areas of the State. If the state wishes to require local communities to contribute financially, the legislature already has the statutory authority to implement a tax in the unorganized borough. Creating an additional level of local government may not produce the desired effect. *Amended 2001, 20003 (Sunset Nov. 2013)*

#### **1.4 MAINTAINING LOCAL CONTROL IN CHARTER SCHOOL FORMATION**

AASB recognizes charter schools as a locally developed alternative to the standard education program. AASB supports charter schools as long as the local school board

- (a) retains the sole authority to approve the charter;
- (b) retains options to terminate the charter of any school that fails to meet criteria set forth in the charter
  - or as otherwise specified by the local school board;
- (c) maintains authority to require and enforce accountability, including determining the criteria, standards,
  - or outcomes that will be used in establishing the charter;
- (d) ensures that a charter does not foster racial, social, religious or economic segregation or segregation of children with disabilities.

**Rationale.** Section 14.12.020 in Title 14 of the Alaska Education Laws states that a school district shall be operated under the management and control of a school board. SB 88, Formation of Charter Schools, became law in 1995. It gave local school boards the ability to approve or deny charter school applications, and not be overturned by another group, and gave local boards the ability to add other requirements for charter schools, including Principal/Head Teacher Certification. *Amended 1998, 1999, 2003 (Sunset Nov. 2013)*

#### **1.5 SCHOOL VOUCHERS**

The Association of Alaska School Boards is opposed to using public tax dollars to finance private, parochial, or home school vouchers.

**Rationale.** Public schools educate every child, regardless of race, ability, religion, economic circumstance, or special needs. Public schools, through their elected school boards, are directly accountable to the citizens of the community for the expenditure of public funds. Taxpayer-funded vouchers for private, parochial, or home school tuition and fees drain scarce resources from public classrooms and diminish revenues available for public schools. Vouchers may raise local taxes if state appropriation is insufficient.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in June 2002 that a voucher program in Ohio did not violate the U.S. Constitution. Referenda in other states have turned down vouchers. The Alaska Supreme Court has held that the following provision of the Alaska Constitution, a restriction independent of the U.S. Constitution, bars disbursement of public funds for the purchase of private or parochial education:

*“The legislature shall by general law establish and maintain a system of public schools open to all children of the State, and may provide for other public educational institutions. Schools and institutions so established shall be free from sectarian control. No money shall be paid from public funds for the direct benefit of any religious or other private educational institution.”*

(Alaska Constitution, Section 1. Public Education.)

In addition, voucher funding tied to students could not fully ensure students or taxpayers the benefits of accountability measures, like state mandated content and student performance standards, and could not satisfy other state and federal mandates under which public schools are

required to operate, without invading the religious and other constitutional freedoms of private and parochial schools. (*Sunset Nov. 2013*)

#### **1.6 CENTRALIZED TREASURY: DISTRIBUTION OF ALLOCATED FUNDS FOR SCHOOLS AND INTEREST EARNED**

AASB urges the Legislature and local governing bodies to assure that all designated funds directed to school districts, including interest earning related thereto, must go to school districts without penalty, and that all interest on school district funds must accrue to the school district.

**Rationale.** Educational funds appropriated by State and local governments are appropriated for the purpose of public education. The efforts of local school districts should be to provide sound planning for future educational needs. State funds allocated to school districts have been retained by certain municipalities under centralized treasuries. Some municipalities retain fund balances on school budget monies, and interest accrued on school funds are sometimes held by the municipalities. As it is unclear how interest on school funds are to be distributed, this action will make certain all moneys allocated and earned for schools are used to benefit children. Currently, with a municipal centralized treasury it is possible for school money to be used for things other than education. "Use it or lose it" is a disincentive to utilize educational funds in the most efficient and effective manner. *Adopted 1998. Amended 2002, 2004, 2008 (Sunset Nov. 2013)*

#### **1.7 SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT (NCLB)**

AASB urges the legislature and the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development to join AASB in advocating for the reauthorization of a significantly improved federal ~~No Child Left Behind Act~~ **Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)** by amending the law to replace arbitrary proficiency targets with ambitious achievement targets based on rates of success actually achieved by the most effective public schools. The federal law should be amended:

- To allow states to measure progress by using students' growth in achievement **over an expanded period of assessments**, as well as their performance in relation to predetermined levels of academic proficiency.
- To ensure state and local control over requirements for "highly qualified" teachers for every class, especially in small schools.
- **To ensure that small, rural districts wishing to expand their innovative educational practices with federal funding are not penalized for their lack of administrative capacity to compete for such funding.**
- To address school improvement and student achievement goals effectively.
- To ensure that improvement plans are given sufficient time to take hold before applying sanctions.
- To raise the funding of Title I and other programs to levels required by these recommendations without reducing expenditures for other educational programs.
- **To continue separate funding for programs in Title VII for the Alaska Native Educational Equity, Support and Assistance Act.**
- **To allow broad flexibility in improvement strategies to tailor response efforts to widely differing reasons for low achievement, especially for very small rural schools.**
- **To replace punitive sanctions for persistent low achievement with remedial resource availability for identification and remediation of specific actual causes of low achievement.**

**Rationale.** Since passage of NCLB, **as amendments to the ESEA in 2001**, local school boards have gained substantial experience with its implementation, including the benefits of having rich data about the performance of specific schools and groups of children in their communities. In addition to these benefits, boards have concluded that NCLB **ESEA** places too much emphasis

on one way of evaluating schools and students. Among our concerns is an over-emphasis of standardized testing; a narrowing of curriculum and instruction to focus on test preparation; the use of sanctions that do not help improve schools; the inherent impossibility of 100 percent of special education and LEP students passing tests at grade level; and inadequate funding. Without amendments to **ESEA NCLB**, state achievement goals must continue to ratchet up to the unrealistic goal of 100 percent proficiency by 2014, when all too many public schools will be subject to arbitrary sanctions for failure to achieve the impossible. AASB also believes that nationally normed tests, such as Terra Nova, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), that are not aligned to Alaska state standards, should not be mandated. *Adopted 2006 Amended 2008 (Sunsets Nov. 2011)*

### **1.8 ACCOUNTABILITY FOR HOME-SCHOOLED STUDENTS OUTSIDE THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM**

AASB urges the Legislature to give State Department of Education and Early Development the authority and funding to register and track the achievement of all school-age children throughout the state who are not enrolled in public schools or private schools that perform assessment substantially equivalent to that performed by the state. Parents of such students should be required to provide information regarding instruction of and progress of their children, to provide accountability that essential skills are being taught and learned. Public school students are already tracked through benchmark exams and the HSGQE. AASB supports assessment of all students to see that adequate, essential skills are being provided.

**Rationale.** The goal is to ensure every child receives a quality education. Children receiving an education outside the public school system at home are not required to register or be accountable throughout their education. The State of Alaska has no compulsory law requiring some form of educational plan be filed with the state. Whether by not enrolling or by leaving the school systems of the state, no “safety nets” for students are in place to assure that all students are receiving the benefit and right of an education. No independent or objective testing, including the high school qualifying exam, is required for these students.

Though home schooling can be very effective for some, public schools often receive students who have fallen behind due to failed home schooling or the lack of schooling. Entry of these students into public education puts the receiving districts in a position of providing substantial remedial assistance, while subjecting the students to the same testing and evaluation standards as other students. With the enactment of federal No Child Left Behind legislation, public schools are unfairly held accountable for any inadequate preparation of entering students. With the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam, inadequately prepared students will pay the price of the state’s failure to monitor the progress of home-schooled students. *Adopted 2000, Amended 2001, 2003, 2006, 2008 (Sunset Nov. 2013)*

### **1.9 COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE AGE**

Current state law requires compulsory school attendance from age 7-16. AASB supports changing the mandatory age for school attendance to run from 6 to the earlier of 18 years old or high school graduation.

**Rationale.** State and local performance standards set high expectations in mathematics, reading and writing for children age 5 through 7. Furthermore, research indicates that earlier education is beneficial. In fact, most children in Alaska are enrolled by the age of 6.

Most 7-year-old kids are in first or second grade. With the renewed emphasis on reading, writing, and mathematics skills in the first few years, skills on which the child will be assessed, children starting school late are at a big disadvantage. With the enactment of federal No Child Left Behind legislation and state designators, the legislature will be accountable for paying the cost of remediation to overcome that disadvantage [NOTE: STATE IS RESPONSIBLE; SCHOOL DISTRICT IS HELD ACCOUNTABLE]. Importantly, reduction of the compulsory school age to 6 would not eliminate active home schooling as a viable alternative for parents.



Sixteen-year-olds are not ready to make the enormous decision to give up a high school education. Increasing the mandatory age to 18 helps ensure that students who have not yet graduated from high school and are too young to make the life-changing decision to forego basic education will stay in school and have more opportunities to meet performance standards and pass the HSGQE. Mandatory attendance laws must be enforced, but the best way to keep students in school is to fund and provide education programs that engage students. *Adopted 2001, Amended 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2009 (Sunset Nov. 2011)*

### **1.10 URGING FEDERAL SUPPORT FOR STATE IMPLEMENTATION OF STANDARDS AND TESTING**

AASB supports the right of local school boards to raise expectations for students and prepare them for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Federal support for states and school districts could be in the form of funding for research, and financial assistance in developing and implementing high standards. AASB opposes mandatory compliance with national content standards or assessment and any effort to condition the receipt of federal aid on the adoption or use of national standards and/or tests by states or local districts.

**Rationale.** School boards and states understand the importance of developing students' abilities in 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. One size does not fit all, however, when it comes to curricula, standards and testing. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) measures specific content and will require curricula changes and instructional alignment, resulting in a considerable investment of funds. *Adopted 2009 (Sunsets 2014)*

### **1.11 ACCOUNTABILITY FOR STUDENT ATTENDANCE**

AASB urges the legislature to adopt incentives and restrictions to induce compliance with Alaska compulsory attendance law. Enforcement of compulsory attendance law is a challenge. Compliance must be rewarded and non-compliance must carry consequences. AASB also urges the Department of Education and Early Development and enforcement agencies to work with districts to support compulsory school attendance laws and provide adequate funding for mandatory enforcement efforts as a matter of child welfare and public safety.

**Rationale.** Research has documented that poor school attendance is one of the greatest predictors of student failure; yet traditional truancy enforcement efforts are expensive and ineffective. Passive enforcement, tying certain privileges and benefits of state residency to compliance with the minimal, but critical, obligation to ensure that students go to school, seems likely to be cost-effective and successful and is well worth a try. *Adopted 2009 (Sunsets 2014)*

## **FUNDING**

### **2.1 SUSTAINED, RELIABLE AND ADEQUATE EDUCATIONAL FUNDING FOR ALASKA'S STUDENTS THROUGH A NON-VOLATILE FUNDING SOURCE**

The sustainability, reliability and adequacy of Alaska's funding for public education are of highest concern to the Association of Alaska School Boards. AASB urges the Legislature to develop a fiscal plan that provides a long-term approach to funding the costs of public education and other services upon which Alaska's students and their families depend.

**Rationale.** The State of Alaska provides a wide range of services to a diverse population spread over a logistically complex area. Providing these services historically cost more than the state has received in recurring revenue. A long-term plan that ensures reliability of funding for education and other state services that impact the delivery of education, regardless of variation in volatile resource markets, is needed to provide a stable business climate and to ensure the citizens of necessary services. *Adopted 2002, Amended 2004 (Sunset Nov. 2012)*

## **2.2 URGING THE LEGISLATURE TO INCREASE THE 20 PERCENT BLOCK GRANT FOR SPECIAL NEEDS**

AASB urges the Alaska Legislature to adjust the 20 percent block grant for special needs and intensive services, including vocational (career and technical), bilingual, gifted learning, and special education funding (AS 14.17.420) to recognize that additional funds are needed for the multiple services funded by this category of formula spending. AASB suggests that the grant be increased to 25 percent immediately pending determination by the Education Committee of the ~~true~~ full amount necessary to adequately fund these services.

**Rationale.** The enactment of SB 36 in 1998 changed the foundation program for K-12 education to provide 20 percent block grants to districts for all special education, vocational technology, bilingual and bicultural programs, and gifted and talented programs. In reality, most districts consume their block grants for special education, leaving little if any funding for vocational and other programs. In 2010, the Alaska Legislature discussed incremental increases to the block grant up to 23 percent, with the intent that additional funds be dedicated to career and technical education. An increase in block grant funding for vocational (career and technical), gifted and talented, and bilingual/bicultural programs would help revive these services in many districts. *Adopted 2008 Amended 2009 (Sunsets 2013)*

### **2.2(a) FULLY IMPLEMENT INCREASES TO THE DISTRICT COST FACTOR AND INTENSIVE NEEDS SECTIONS OF THE FOUNDATION FORMULA AND BEGIN IMMEDIATE REVIEW OF THE DISTRICT COST FACTORS**

AASB urges the Legislature to accelerate already scheduled increases to ~~Intensive Needs (AS 14.17.420(1)) and District Cost Factor (AS 14.17.460) sections~~ of the foundation formula so that they take affect in full as soon as possible. ~~In view of recent cost increases for delivery of these mandated services, the foundation formula should more accurately reflect these cost increases.~~ AASB calls for the legislature to conduct a review of District Cost Factors to ensure their accuracy. This review process should include School Board members, administrators and business managers from a cross section of Alaska communities.

**Rationale.** The District Cost Factor is intended to create equity among districts with varying built-in costs of doing business. ~~The Intensive Needs factor is intended to create equity by recognizing the extreme cost differential in providing mandated services to special education students with intensive needs.~~ Inasmuch as the Legislature has recognized that these inequities exist and has adopted a phased approach to address them, the Legislature should immediately mitigate these inequities by going directly to the fully phased-in factors. Any review of the costs associated with education in Alaska's rural communities should be inclusive of those who are engaged in providing these services. *Adopted 2008 Amended 2009 (Sunsets 2013)*

## **2.3 URGING CONSIDERATION OF ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION FUNDING TASK FORCE**

AASB urges the 26<sup>th</sup> Alaska Legislature to give careful consideration to a variety of education issues that were recommended for referral to the new standing Committees on Education in the report of September 1, 2007 by the Joint Legislative Education Task Force. Those issues include:

1. Charter and correspondence schools and home-schooling
- ~~2. Special needs block grant~~
3. Vocational technology programs
4. Required local effort and federal Title VIII Impact Aid
5. Moore v. State of Alaska decision and order
- ~~6. Overlapping timing for state and school district budget cycles~~
7. Innovative or best practices grants
8. Voluntary Pre-K programs
9. Alaska Military Youth Academy funding
10. ~~National Forest Receipts program~~ Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act

In addition, AASB encourages the 26<sup>th</sup> Alaska Legislature to examine the need for revising and updating AS 14.17.450, school size factor, to address the growing cost of operating schools.

**Rationale.** The task force report noted that education and school funding issues merit regular and continuing attention from a standing committee. With passage of SCR 15 in the 2008 session, the House and Senate each created a standing Committee on Education, which should have the time, resources and staff to give careful consideration to the issues that were identified by the task force for referral. AS 14.17.450 was enacted in 1998 and needs to be examined closely. *Adopted 2008 (Sunsets 2013)*

## **2.4 FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF STATEWIDE STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT**

The Association of Alaska School Boards urges the Alaska Legislature to provide the financial support necessary for public education, the Department of Education & Early Development, universities and other agencies to fully realize the potential of a standards-based educational system focused on increasing student achievement. To ensure a successful standards-based educational program that helps students meet and go beyond standards, the Association of Alaska School Boards supports additional funding for the following strategies:

1. Increased learning time and credit recovery programs through an expanded day or extended school year and/or remediation efforts like summer school to increase learning.
2. Professional/technical assistance to align curriculum with standards, instruction and assessments.
3. Enhanced teacher preparation and professional development.
4. Teacher/administrator recruitment to attract highly qualified professionals to come and stay in Alaska.
5. Accommodation of special needs students.
6. Early entry opportunities.

**Rationale.** Over the years, many forums have identified a variety of statewide strategies to help meet student performance standards. Some students who have not completed credits will not be able to graduate on time (within the four-year plan) and will be considered dropouts. Summer school and other credit recovery programs would expand opportunities to graduate on time with a full diploma.

In addition, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requires all students to meet high standards. Special Education students often require specific learning strategies, specialty trained educators and support staff, as well as additional time and resources. These strategies are critical to increase achievement, but also require increased funding. *Adopted 2000, Amended 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2008, 2009 (Sunset Nov. 2013)*

## **2.5 AASB ADVOCACY ON INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN EDUCATION ACT (IDEA)**

Following passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, AASB will monitor and advocate the following:

1. Increased funding to fully fund the federal mandate.
2. Resolution of differential treatment and discipline for special education students.
3. Provision for adequate staffing/teacher preparation.
4. Establishment of post-secondary educational programs to train additional individuals as certified special education teachers and related services providers (i.e. school psychologists, physical therapists, and speech therapists).
5. Decrease in current high staff turnover.
6. Provision for teacher liability/legal protections for advocates.
7. Placement of students and delivery of services.
8. Mediation between school districts and parents when disagreements develop over student placements.
9. Reduction of massive required paperwork.

**Rationale.** AASB joins with the National School Boards Association in urging Congress to fairly and fully fund this federal mandate. IDEA was enacted in 1975 when the federal government committed to paying for each child with disabilities an amount equal to 40 percent of the national average cost of educating students with disabilities. According to the National School Boards Association, federal funding accounts for approximately 18% of the necessary funding. The remainder comes directly from the regular instructional program of local school districts. The total under-funding of IDEA was estimated at \$8.3 billion in Fiscal Year 2008.

Local school officials must be empowered to preserve a productive and safe learning environment free of undue disruption or violence. Consistent discipline requirements and procedures are the keys to a safe environment. Issues such as discipline and excessive paperwork are having a negative impact on educators; as a result fewer certified personnel are willing to teach in special education programs. *Adopted 2000. Amended 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2005, 2009 (Sunset Nov. 2013)*

## **2.6 FUNDING STANDARDS-BASED EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS IN ALASKA**

AASB supports legislation to add additional funding for the planning and programming of voluntary early learning and family support programs for all pre-school children as an important long-term investment in Alaska's future workforce and citizenry.

**Rationale.** State and local performance standards set high expectations in mathematics, reading and writing for children age 5 through 7. Research indicates that earlier education is critical for many children to successfully reach those expectations. With the enactment of federal No Child Left Behind legislation, the legislature will be responsible for paying the cost of missing the opportunity to reach children at the age when the greatest gains in mental development are possible. Even in communities which have Head Start programs, the program is usually unable to accommodate all children who qualify. Strict Headstart income requirements deprive many pre-schoolers who could benefit from the program. Appropriately housed early learning programs should be an integral part of district curriculum. Inclusion of early learning in a school has an impact on facilities planning and would be a wise use of state funds.

The state offers only very limited pilot funding for early-learning education. Many communities do not meet the qualifications for federal Head Start or early-learning funding and sources of present federal funding are uncertain. Most existing early-learning programs cannot afford certificated early-learning teachers. *Amended 2001, 2002, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009 (Sunset Nov. 2013)*

## **2.7 FUNDING FOR INTENSIVE NEEDS PRE-SCHOOL AND OTHER INTENSIVE NEEDS STUDENTS ENROLLING POST-COUNT DATE**

AASB supports prorated funding for 3-year-old preschool students with intensive needs who turn three years old after the October count date, thereby becoming eligible for enrollment and enrolling in public school after state funding has become fixed. Extra pro-rated funds must also be provided for all other intensive needs students enrolling after the count date.

**Rationale.** IDEA '97 requires that public schools enroll students with disabilities at age three. These students typically require not only special education services but also extensive related services (speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy). Preschool students with disabilities whose third birthday falls after the October count date incur costs to the district that are not typical of other students enrolling after the count date. The district is required to provide all services identified by the IEP team. Currently, districts receive no funding for these costly services for those intensive-needs children who turn three years old after the state's October count date.

Other intensive-need students who move to a district after the October count date pose a similar financial challenge. The cost to provide federally mandated services to a single intensive needs child is many times the cost of services to a non-special needs child. Districts cannot be expected to absorb the costs of services for intensive needs children who first enroll after the count date under a budget that provides no funding to satisfy this federal requirement. Supplemental funding for post-count date intensive needs students is critical. At the same time, districts that have lost intensive needs students through transfers have already entered into binding contracts with staff and cannot easily avoid that continued cost.

*Adopted 2003, Amended 2004, 2005, 2006, 2009 (Sunset Nov.2013)*

## **2.8 FOLLOWING THE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT PRIORITY LISTS FOR NON BONDED PROJECTS**

AASB supports following the priority lists for non-bonded projects as presented by the Department of Education and Early Development and providing funding with no adjustments, deletions, or additions that would not otherwise be of an emergency basis. AASB strongly encourages the legislature and administration to make significant progress on eliminating the statewide capital project and major maintenance backlog. **Enactment of AS 14.11.025 (State aid for School construction in regional educational attendance areas) by the 26<sup>th</sup> Alaska Legislature was a good step in that direction and is applauded by AASB.**

**Rationale.** The Capital Improvement Projects list goes through a very comprehensive prioritization process developed and implemented, based on need, by the Department of Education and Early Development. AASB encourages the Legislature to follow the prioritized lists and recognize that fluctuations in enrollment cause many districts to face varying economies of scale when maintaining educational facilities. **The creation of the school fund for REAA facility construction in 2010 will enable the state to create a pool of funding, up to \$70 million a year beginning in mid-2012, for construction and major maintenance in rural Alaska.** *Adopted 2000, Amended 2001, 2004, 2008, 2009 (Sunset Nov. 2013)*

## **2.9 LOCAL CONTRIBUTION IN THE SCHOOL FUNDING FORMULA**

AASB supports retaining in the school funding formula the local option of establishing a local contribution based on 45 percent of basic need for borough and municipal school districts.

**Rationale.** The current education funding formula was developed with statewide support for all school age children. It allows for a minimum local contribution of the lesser of 4 mills or 45% of basic need. *Adopted 2001, Amended 2004, 2005 (Sunset Nov. 2011)*

## **2.10 EDUCATION ENDOWMENT**

AASB lends its full support to the concept of a properly funded and well-managed educational endowment to help secure stable and full funding for education to be used for public elementary and secondary education.

**Rationale.** The funding of public K-12 education in our state is an annual appropriation from the General Fund and is subject to the shifting funding priorities of administrations and legislatures, and the variable level of state revenues. Budgetary cycles have increasingly failed to provide a stable and secure funding source for Alaskan students. An educational endowment will provide a proven, relatively secure, and dedicated fiscal resource to support future public education funding for our state, and allow long-range education planning with confidence in the availability of that resource. *Amended 1998, 1999, 2002, 2007, 2009 (Sunset Nov. 2013)*

## **2.11 INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY**

Because of the global economy of which our youth will be a part, AASB urges the state and federal governments to ensure that all classrooms are provided affordable and equitable broadband access to the national information infrastructure. AASB urges the Legislature

- a. to implement appropriations or matching grants for instructional technology that would address hardware and software purchases, communication, infrastructure and training needs of students and staff, **and, specifically to fund continuation and expansion of the AASB Consortium for Digital Learning to build empirical evidence regarding benefits of integration of technology into instruction over time.** ~~Appropriations by the Alaska Legislature in 2006 and 2008 have enabled about half of the state's school districts to pilot intensive digital learning for some of their students as members of the AASB Consortium for Digital Learning.~~
- b. ~~We request the Legislature~~ to join us in urging Congress to fully fund either the provisions of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 (E-rate program) or a robust educational

technology substitute that protects the Universal Service Fund to help provide affordable telecommunications to rural areas.

**Rationale.** Alaskan students are growing up in a digital age that is allowing access to all global markets. If our students are to thrive in this ever-increasing global economy, K-12 schools must have the tools and trained staff to provide the appropriate education. Currently, a number of schools have seen many of their technology purchases become obsolete, outdated, and inoperable. Teachers are unable to effectively integrate technology in the classrooms due to lack or inadequacy of equipment and/or training. Current school district budgets cannot provide adequate funds to meet existing or future instructional technology needs.

Equality in educational opportunity has always been a goal of the Association of Alaska School Boards. Future economic viability will not depend as much on physical presence, but rather the ability to import, transmit or convey ideas and information electronically. Today's globally competitive economy requires that all schools have access to modern technologies—Internet access, computers, distance learning—that can open new doors of educational opportunity for our school children. **Appropriations by the Alaska Legislature in 2006 and 2008 have enabled about half of the state's school districts to pilot intensive digital learning for some of their students as members of the AASB Consortium for Digital Learning.** Amended 1998, 1999, 2001, 2004, 2006, 2008 (Sunset Nov. 2013)

## **2.12 SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION DEBT RETIREMENT FOR BONDED INDEBTEDNESS**

AASB calls upon the Legislature and the administration to fully honor **the statutory** all past commitments for bonded indebtedness reimbursement **by appropriating all funds necessary to satisfy that commitment** and applauds the 26<sup>th</sup> Legislature's indefinite extension of ~~to meet future school construction needs by extending beyond November, 2010 and continuing to fully fund~~ the school debt reimbursement program. AASB strongly encourages serious consideration to reducing the burden of district bonded indebtedness during times of increased state revenues.

**Rationale.** Article 7, Sec. 1 of the Alaska State Constitution states that the Legislature shall establish and maintain a system of public schools open to all children. Under AS 14.11.100 the State of Alaska **commits** ~~agreed~~ to repay school districts at set percentage rates for school construction bonded indebtedness in past years. Extending that program into the future ~~will help~~ **will help** meet school construction needs in areas of the state that are able to bond. Over the past years of high growth many regions of the State have bonded for school construction with the expectation that the State would honor its obligation. Amended 1998, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009 (Sunset Nov. 2013)

## **2.13 REVENUE SHARING**

Municipalities play a large part in financing education and providing community services necessary to student learning. The Association of Alaska School Boards supports restored and increased funding for Municipal Revenue Sharing & Assistance, such as SB 72 adopted by the 25<sup>th</sup> Alaska Legislature in 2008. AASB recognizes that an increase in community support cannot substitute for necessary increases in direct education funding.

**Rationale.** Support for this program is essential. Without revenue sharing, which was vetoed in 2003, communities were forced to raise taxes to meet the cost of state mandates. Passage of SB 72 restored the program with \$60 million in general funds for distribution to communities annually over the next three years. As the level of state revenue collected under AS 43.55.011(g) fluctuates, payments to local governments may go up or down. Revenue sharing as a proportion of the state budget is near its historic low point. Statehood was premised on the notion that state-owned resources would generate tax or other revenue and that this money would be shared with local government because local government could not survive without it. Adopted 1999, Amended 2000, 2001, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009 (Sunset: Nov. 2013)

## **2.14 PUPIL TRANSPORTATION**

AASB urges the State of Alaska to fully fund pupil transportation to keep up with rapidly rising fuel and other operating costs, and provide funding for districts with increased transportation needs due to special

circumstances and/or student growth. Getting students safely to and from school is a vital part of public education. AASB supports the revision of AS 14.09.010 to remove the cap and provide adjustments to the transportation grant program reflective of transportation mandates and operating expenses.

**Rationale.** Passage of HB 273 by the 25<sup>th</sup> Alaska Legislature recalibrated the state formula for transportation funding to recognize FY 2007 actual costs. In addition, HB 273 inserts a new inflation adjustment (AS 14.09.01(c)) to provide for annual increases to recalibration beginning in October, 2009. However, HB 273 inserts a new inflation factor addressed only to the CPI, which understates the unprecedented increase in the cost of fuel. *Adopted 2000, Amended 2001, 2002, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2008 (Sunset Nov. 2013)*

## **2.15 FUNDING FOR SCHOOL DISTRICT-OPERATED REGIONAL BOARDING HOME PROGRAMS**

AASB supports providing adequate funding for locally controlled and operated, regional boarding high schools throughout the state.

**Rationale.** The number of students requesting enrollment at Mt. Edgecumbe School exceeds the space available. Passage of a boarding schools/charter school law in 1997 (ASL Ch. 113) allows for the creation of boarding schools specifically not funded by the state. AASB would like to see that changed to provide students with the option of attending locally controlled regional boarding high school operated by a school district. *Amended 1997, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2007 (Sunset Nov. 2013)*

## **2.16 FUNDING FOR TRANSIENT STUDENTS IN SCHOOLS**

The Association of Alaska School Boards supports development of a funding mechanism for compensating schools for students entering after the October count date without harming a school that loses a student for which it has already incurred costs.

**Rationale.** Each year, students throughout Alaska enroll in boarding and other schools around the state. Often, students leave schools immediately following the October count. These students generally return to their home districts. Other districts face large influx of military-dependent and resource development project students. The untimely arrival of students after the count date puts the receiving school districts at a financial disadvantage. Districts receiving students after the October count must bear the financial responsibility for educating these students without corresponding funds. Districts losing students after the count date have already committed themselves to legally binding contracts and cannot easily adjust spending levels to account for the loss of those students. *Adopted 2002, Amended 2003, 2008, 2009 (Sunset Nov. 2012)*

## **2.17 INSURANCE COSTS**

AASB urges the Alaska State Legislature to take action through increased funding to mitigate increases in insurance costs.

**Rationale.** Insurance costs are draining badly needed resources for the classrooms and will continue to do so unless steps are taken to mitigate these uncontrolled increases, which only add to the administrative overhead of all districts. The cost of health and liability coverage, in particular, has added to escalation of fixed costs faced by districts. *Adopted 2002, Amended 2003, 2006, 2007 (Sunset Nov. 2012)*

## **2.18 STATUTORY GROUNDS FOR REDUCTION IN FORCE**

Every Alaska school board must be able to make responsible decisions about how to allocate district resources to provide a high-quality education program that meets the needs of students. The Association of Alaska School Boards supports clarification of the law explicitly to allow the use of projections of enrollment, costs and revenues as valid bases upon which to develop a plan for reduction in force under AS 14.20.177. The Association also supports clarification of the law to recognize that school boards have discretion to decide when a reduction in force is necessary for the following year.

**Rationale.** Under the current wording of AS 14.20.177, NEA-Alaska has argued and at least one Superior Court judge has ruled that reductions in enrollment or revenue must have already taken place in order to reduce staff. In addition, NEA-Alaska has argued and a Superior Court judge has ruled that a school board's judgment regarding the necessity of a reduction in force is not its to make; instead, a school district must prove that a reduction in force is necessary.

A school district's ability to respond quickly to a drop in enrollment or negative change in its financial picture is already significantly limited by the fact that mid-year layoffs of teaching staff are not permitted under AS 14.20.177. Neither is an increase in costs a basis for mid-year layoffs. However, school boards should be able to respond to both actual and projected declines in enrollment or funding by developing plans to reduce staff for the following year. School boards should also have the ability to reduce staff in the following year in response to costs increases that are not offset by increases in funding.

A school board's judgment that a reduction in force is necessary is the kind of policy decision that the public elects school boards to make. *Adopted 2003, Amended 2004, 2005, 2006, 2008 (Sunset Nov. 2013)*

## **2.19 INCREASED FORMULA FUNDING**

AASB calls on state policy makers to appropriate funding adequate to meet the increasing needs of Alaska's youth, increasing requirements of state and federal law and inflationary increases in costs.

**Rationale.** The Joint Legislative Education Funding Task Force was charged with examining school district cost differentials and the existing formula for distributing state aid for education. At a minimum, full implementation of the Task Force recommendations needs to be accelerated to July 1, 2010. Appropriating an adequate amount to fund education is a legislative responsibility. The primary responsibility for school boards is allocation of those funds. Unlike many school boards throughout the nation, Alaska school boards do not have fiscal autonomy.

School boards know from experience that "full funding" of the education funding formula by state policy-makers does not necessarily equate to "adequate" funding. Our success as a state in meeting the requirements of NCLB will require an investment in people, processes, and accountability measures.

Our parents and communities are calling for decreased class size, additional support for at-risk students, adequate textbooks and teaching materials, and updated technology, all of which require additional funding. The state needs to provide funds to prevent declines in current educational services and to provide for strengthening into the future. *Adopted 2003, Amended 2004, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2009 (Sunset Nov. 2013)*

## **2.20 LEGISLATIVE FINANCIAL RELIEF FOR ONGOING TRS AND PERS EMPLOYER RATE INCREASES**

The Association of Alaska School Boards supports the cost-share legislation passed by the 25<sup>th</sup> Alaska Legislature requiring the state to pay 87.44 percent of employer costs under the Teachers' Retirement System and 78 percent of the costs under the Public Employees Retirement System. AASB endorses the use of state revenue or other funding sources, **and particularly the recent \$500 million settlement with Mercer**, to retire the unfunded liability of the public employee retirement systems.

**Rationale.** Districts simply do not have the capacity to handle the massive unfunded liability of the state's retirement programs. The passage of SB 125 in 2008 established the cost-share approach that freezes district employer costs for retirement benefits at 12.56 percent under TRS and 22 percent under PERS. At the same time, the unfunded future liability for both systems remains in excess of \$8 billion over the next two decades, according to actuarial estimates in 2008. **Because the recent \$500 million settlement with Mercer was specifically based on a claim that flaws in Mercer's advice to the state was a significant contributing cause of the unfunded liability, the settlement proceeds should be devoted to reducing that liability.** *Amended 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 (Sunset Nov. 2013)*

## **2.21 MODIFICATION OF MINIMUM INSTRUCTIONAL EXPENDITURE REQUIREMENT**



AASB requests repeal of the Minimum Instructional Expenditure requirement, (AS 14.17.520) to reflect reasonable thresholds appropriate for districts of various sizes and cost levels.

**Rationale.** While AASB members place the highest priority on funding instruction, the requirement that all districts must spend at least 70% of the district budget on expenditures for teachers and for instruction is arbitrary and does not reflect state and federal mandates and other non-instructional expenses, and ignores the needs and wishes of the community.

For many remote school districts, the minimum instructional expenditure requirement is unrealistic and does not reflect the fiscal reality of sharply increasing energy and other operating costs faced by all school districts.

The State Board of Education & Early Development regularly grants waivers of the minimum instructional expenditures requirement to more than half of Alaska's school districts, recognizing the impacted districts had no fiscal capacity to comply with the law. The administrative burden of making annual waiver requests absorbs critical instructional dollars at the district level as well as needlessly using up statewide administrative resources for review. The EED Board voted in January, 2007, (see resolution 01-2007) to request that the Legislature repeal the 70 percent rule as a waste of resources and duplicative of existing systems for assuring student achievement. *Amended 2004, 2005, 2007, 2008 (Sunset Nov. 2013)*

## **2.22 ENERGY COST RELIEF**

AASB urges the Alaska State Legislature to take action, through increased or supplemental funding to mitigate the huge increase in energy costs facing all school districts due to higher fuel prices. The relief should be based on actual energy costs and be part of an overall program to address conservation of energy, development of alternative energy programs and deferred maintenance of public facilities and buildings.

**Rationale.** The State of Alaska has benefited from sustained, high yields of oil revenue, but for consumers of energy, higher prices have depleted funding for other needs. As one of the state's largest consumers of energy, public schools deserve the same consideration as municipalities, which have received financial assistance from the state to help defray increased fuel cost. The cost of fuel has risen significantly over the last three years, placing a hardship on schools and biting deeply into the maximum administrative cost share. This relief should be based on actual energy cost.

Possible relief measures should include initiating an Energy Cost Increase Factor in the foundation formula and/or providing supplemental funding in the year the cost is incurred, thereby putting funding back in the classroom. *Adopted 2005. Amended 2008 (Sunsets 2010)*

## **2.23 RELIABLE AND EFFICIENT SERVICE BY THE ALASKA MARINE HIGHWAY SYSTEM**

AASB urges the State of Alaska to provide or subsidize frequent, reliable and efficient ferry service to all Southeast, Southwest, and Southcentral communities served by the Alaska Marine Highway System.

**Rationale.** School districts in Southeast and Southcentral Alaska depend on ferry access to provide transportation to and from other communities for numerous academic and athletic activities. The lack of frequent and dependable scheduled ferry service often makes it difficult or impossible to utilize the AMHS in school-sponsored trips. The only alternative for many of the communities served by the AMHS is to arrange travel by air, which markedly increases transportation costs and in some cases causes trips to be canceled entirely. *Adopted 2006, Amended 2007, 2008 (Sunsets 2011)*

## **2.24 FORWARD FUNDING FOR SCHOOLS**

AASB supports forward funding for schools. **At a minimum, the Base Student Allocation (BSA) should be established at least one year ahead to** ~~This would~~ provide sufficient time for school districts to

prepare and submit their budgets in a timely manner without spending unnecessary time and resources revising budgets based on legislative action after the local budget process has begun. The Education Fund, AS 14.17.300, must **also be maintained and increased** replenished for this purpose.

**Rationale.** The 25<sup>th</sup> Alaska Legislature took a major step towards implementing forward funding by building increases into the funding formula for three fiscal years. **The 26<sup>th</sup> Legislature chose to appropriate money from the Education Fund to fill a budget hole in FY 2010. In the second session, the Legislature replenished the Fund.** With the Education Fund replenished **and maintained**, ~~starting with the 2011 session, the Legislature would need~~s to fund only one year at a time, but **will ensure** ~~would be~~ funding a full fiscal year in advance. ~~The 26<sup>th</sup> Legislature chose to appropriate money from the Education Fund to fill a budget hole in FY 2010.~~

When state oil revenues start to decline, the amount spent on education might also decline, but local school districts would have a full fiscal year to prepare for the reduction in revenue. Forward funding will provide fiscal stability for districts so they can make long-term decisions, reduce administrative cost and enable school districts to focus on student instruction rather than constant budget revisions.

While early funding of the education budget – i.e., a signed education funding bill within the first 30 days of the session – would also reduce the administrative burden on school districts, the legislature does not receive its revenue projections in time to accomplish that goal. Forward funding – **establishing both the BSA and setting aside sufficient funds to cover it** a full year in advance – would eliminate the pressure for passage of the education appropriation early in the legislative session. *Adopted 2006, Amended 2007, 2009 (Sunsets Nov. 2011)*

## **2.25 RECONSTITUTION AND ACTIVE MANAGEMENT OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOL LAND TRUST AND PERMANENT FUND**

AASB supports additional research into reconstitution of the Alaska Public School Land Trust, active management of the trust and working with Alaska PTA and other educational stakeholders to that end.

**Rationale.** A promise was made to Alaska public school children on March 4, 1915, when “An Act to reserve lands to the Territory of Alaska for educational uses, and for other purposes,” (38 Stat. 1214, Public Law 63-330/Chapter 181, 63 Congress, Session 3) was approved by Congress and signed by President Woodrow Wilson. PL 63-330 requires when federal lands are surveyed, Sections 16 and 36 in each township shall be and were reserved for the support of common schools in Alaska. *Adopted 2007 (Sunsets Nov. 2012)*

## **2.26 SUPPORTING EXCELLENCE IN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND MATH INSTRUCTION**

AASB recognizes and supports national efforts to increase the nation's scientific and engineering talent pool in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) fields. AASB urges the Governor and the Alaska State Legislature to establish a fund to invest strategically in STEM education, focusing on professional development, materials and equipment needed for active, hands-on learning for K-12 students in classrooms across the state.

**Rationale.** The Alaska Department of Education & Early Development has added science standards and testing requirements and the No Child Left Behind Act is scheduled to add this requirement in 2010. There is growing recognition that the U.S. must increase its commitment to science and math to retain its competitive advantage in the world. Students learn science best by actively engaging in the practice of science. Teachers need professional development and science resources to offer students outstanding hands-on, active learning opportunities in the sciences. Science classroom equipment and consumable supplies are unique and expensive. Skyrocketing energy costs and increasing operating costs consume school budgets, limiting the ability of districts to address long-deferred expenses such as science curriculum and equipment. Excellence in STEM fields is vital to Alaska's and the nation's long-term economic prospects. *Adopted 2008 (Sunsets Nov. 2013)*

## **2.27 URGING REVISIONS TO THE STEP-DOWN HOLD-HARMLESS CLAUSE FOR REDUCTIONS IN ADM**

AASB urges the Alaska Legislature to revise from 5 percent to 2.5 percent the hold-harmless threshold (AS14.17.450) for reductions in average daily membership.

**Rationale.** Passage of HB 273 by the 25<sup>th</sup> Alaska Legislature included a provision that if a school district's ADM adjusted for school size decreases by 5 percent or more from one fiscal year to the next, the school district may use the last fiscal year before the decrease as a base fiscal year to offset the decrease. The provision includes a step-down clause holding districts harmless for a portion of the ADM decrease during the next three fiscal years, if the 5 percent enrollment decline continues and none of the decline is attributable to a loss of students caused by a boundary change under AS 29.

Under AS14.17.250, school districts that experience enrollment declines of anywhere between 2 and 5 percent would be impacted severely because they would not qualify for the step-down provision. *Adopted 2008 (Sunsets Nov. 2013)*

## **2.28 SUPPORTING A REDUCTION IN THE ADM THRESHOLD FOR K-6 AND 7-12 SCHOOLS**

AASB urges the Legislature to amend AS 14.17.905 to reduce to no higher than 41 the community ADM threshold for counting the K-6 ADM and 7-12 ADM as separate schools.

**Rationale.** The current threshold of 101 ADM for counting K-6 and 7-12 as separate schools was established before the NCLB requirement to have "highly qualified" teachers teaching in all core academic areas. Given the numerous requirements for graduation, it is virtually impossible for small secondary schools to employ teachers who are "highly qualified" in multiple core academic areas if their funding is reduced by not being funded as a separate school. As currently written, AS14.17.905 does not recognize the financial requirements imposed on small schools to employ "highly qualified" secondary teachers. The Alaska Association of School Administrators has expressly endorsed the 41-student threshold. *Adopted 2008 Amended 2009 (Sunsets Nov. 2013)*

## **2.29 URGING THE STATE TO MITIGATE THE IMPACTS OF EXCESS FACILITY SPACE IN DISTRICTS**

AASB urges the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development or other appropriate agencies to investigate the financial impacts on school districts when reduced enrollment leaves excess school facility infrastructure, and to make recommendations to mitigate the burden on per-student funding posed by facilities no longer required for reduced enrollment.

**Rationale.** School districts report instances of excess facility infrastructure that were built before the advent of state guidelines for construction or because of declining enrollment or both. In some cases, schools have been closed because ADM fell below 10. Excess space must be insured, operated and maintained regardless of whether the funds generated under the foundation formula are sufficient. Even closed schools must be insured and should incur some operation and maintenance expenses to ensure that they will be usable if ADM should later warrant reopening them. *Adopted 2008 (Sunsets Nov. 2013)*

## **2.30 REQUESTING THE STATE TO AUDIT ALL SCHOOL BUILDINGS AND CREATE A FACILITY MAJOR MAINTENANCE AND REPLACEMENT LIST**

AASB urges the Alaska Legislature to fund a statewide audit of all K-12 public school facilities to determine which buildings require major maintenance or replacement and which should be retrofitted to be the most energy efficient and sustainable for the 21st Century. The audit should be conducted at least every five years by the Department of Education & Early Development with special attention to Alaska's unique construction requirements and the need to mitigate Seasonal Affective Disorder through proper lighting.

**Rationale.** School districts now submit to the state annually a six-year plan of maintenance and building replacement needs. From those lists, EED establishes a priority list for facility replacement and major maintenance. However, the EED priority list does not give the Legislature a complete picture of the

condition of all school facilities in Alaska. A regular auditing process would give EED and the Legislature a schedule of replacement and maintenance projects statewide needed in the next three years, five years and 10 years. *Adopted 2008 Amended 2009 (Sunsets Nov. 2013)*

### **2.31 RECOGNIZING THE ONE-TIME NATURE OF THE FEDERAL ECONOMIC STIMULUS FUNDING FOR EDUCATION**

The \$171 million received by school districts statewide through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 will be put to good use during the next two years in expansion of Title 1 and IDEA services. State Fiscal Stabilization Funds may be used for a wider variety of programs. We also stand accountable for properly investing the money in advancing the education of Alaska public school students and meeting mandates previously under-funded by the federal government. Alaska school districts also recognize the one-time nature of the economic stimulus program.

**Rationale.** This resolution confirms the position previously stated in a letter AASB sent to the State. *Adopted 2009 (Sunsets Nov. 2014)*

### **2.32 URGING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A FUNDING POOL TO HELP FUND TRAVEL FOR STUDENTS TO ATTEND STATE-LEVEL COMPETITIONS**

AASB recognizes that a comprehensive public education includes extracurricular activities such as sports and the arts. Involvement in interscholastic activities has been shown to increase academic achievement. As such, the opportunity for students to participate at state-level tournaments, festivals and competitions is one of the educational experiences we want and endeavor to have our children experience. Due to the ever increasing costs associated with travel and lodging for school districts to attend state-level competitions, AASB urges the Alaska School Activities Association, the Alaska Legislature and the Governor to work together to establish a funding pool to help school districts fund travel for students to attend state-level tournaments, festivals or competitions.

**Rationale.** Travel expenses to state-level tournaments and competitions are not normally budgeted by school districts. The preponderance of the burden to fund travel for extracurricular activities has fallen to parents and rural communities that are facing more difficult economic issues and fewer available dollars to support these opportunities. The ASAA and the state should help by establishing a funding mechanism to help students to attend state-level competitions. *Adopted 2009 (Sunsets Nov. 2014)*

### **2.33 REQUESTING AASB TO EXPLORE CREATION OF A CENTRAL PURCHASING AGENCY**

AASB is requested to explore the feasibility of helping to create a statewide central purchasing agency to improve the ability of school districts to acquire educational materials, supplies, services, equipment and technology.

**Rationale.** The average Alaska school district is too small to create a purchasing benefit with suppliers. And due to budgetary pressures, Alaska school districts too often decide to reduce spending on materials and technology. Maine, New Hampshire and Michigan are among the states that have created savings for their districts, staff and students through purchasing agencies that combine the spending power of school districts. *Adopted 2009*

### **2.34 URGING THE LEGISLATURE TO ANNUALLY FUND VOCATIONAL (CAREER AND TECHNICAL) EDUCATION OUTSIDE OF THE BLOCK GRANT**

AASB urges the Legislature to fund Vocational Education outside of the block grant under AS14.17.420 to recognize the importance of education for vocational, career and technical, and trade programs in our schools. Vocational, career tech, and trades offerings help engage students, provide an effective alternate platform for academic education while helping students learn about and focus on a potential career path in middle and high school that would prepare them for vocational education and jobs in our state. AASB suggests that a separate continuing grant for Vocational (Career and Technical) Education be authorized without decreasing the block grant that currently exists.

**Rationale.** The enactment of SB 36 in 1998 changed the foundation formula for K -12 education to provide 20 percent block grants to districts for all special education, vocational technology, bilingual and bicultural programs, and gifted and talented programs. In reality, most districts consume their block grants for special education, leaving little if any funding for vocational and other programs. A separate grant for vocational technology would help increase offerings in many districts. By continuing to keep the funding for vocational education in the block grant the current formula does not provide adequate funding, as special education needs are paramount. In addition, bilingual and bicultural programs and gifted and talented would be strengthened. This also recognizes that districts are hearing their legislators' concerns of providing more career tech awareness and opportunities in schools. *Adopted 2009 (Sunsets Nov. 2014)*

### **(NEW) 2.35 SUPPORTING STATE FUNDING FOR SCHOOL MEALS**

AASB supports an adequate financial appropriation from the state to strengthen and expand the National School Lunch and Breakfast Program in Alaska so that school breakfast programs and a sustainable lunch may be available to all children at all schools throughout the state.

**Rationale.** No child should go without breakfast. The lack of adequate nutrition affects the cognitive and behavioral development of children. Food insecurity, meaning a lack of access at all times to enough food for a healthy, active life, was reported among 15 percent of Alaska children, compared with 11 percent of Alaska adults, in a 2006 study (the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey). The problem is more acute in rural Alaska, where nearly one child in four experienced food insecurity.

The National School Breakfast Program decreases food insecurity in children by providing five healthy meals a week. In Alaska schools, 40 percent of students qualify for free/reduced school meals; of these 45,000 students, 15 percent, or about 7,000 children, do not attend schools that offer a breakfast program. In all, more than 100 public schools in Alaska did not sponsor or offer the federal School Breakfast Program in the 2008-09 school year, due primarily to a lack of funding.

## **CHILD ADVOCACY**

### **3.1 DECLARING CHILDREN THE TOP PRIORITY OF ALASKA**

AASB encourages the Alaska Legislature and the Governor to declare children the top priority of the state. This declaration extends to the safety, health, education and future of our children.

**Rationale.** A declaration of this kind by the state would lend support to prevention and protective services, for all education needs and for a long-range fiscal plan for state government services. *Adopted 2004 Sunsets 2013*

### **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<sup>®</sup>." 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. *Amended 1998, 2002, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 (Sunset Nov. 2013)*

### **3.3 FETAL ALCOHOL AND DRUG EXPOSED STUDENTS**

AASB requests that the Alaska Legislature provide and improve effective programs and services aimed at the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) within our state, and to allocate adequate funding necessary to provide parent and guardian training, school staff training, paraprofessional and specialized educational services, including transportation, necessary to serve children with FASD and/or who have suffered from prenatal exposure to illicit drugs.

**Rationale.** Prevention is the best long-term approach. The public must be educated that the use of alcohol/drugs during pregnancy may severely affect and damage children. The child who has been prenatally exposed to drugs and/or alcohol is at risk for developmental, behavioral, psychosocial and learning problems. Alaska’s public schools must provide educational services to all children regardless of developmental impairment. Although Alaska has one of the highest incidence rates of children born with FASD, not all communities have the ability to diagnosis this disease. Not all children with FASD meet the criteria for Special Ed Programs. It is estimated that for every child born with true fetal alcohol syndrome, 10 are born with developmental delay in the context of prenatal alcohol exposure and are difficult to identify.

Children with FASD often require special instructional strategies and materials. The educational identification and service of children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder is extremely expensive. Funding support for education of children with disabilities is already barely sufficient to meet the needs of those children currently identified. *Amended 1998, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2009 (Sunset Nov. 2013)*

### **3.4 PREVENTING ACCESS TO PORNOGRAPHY ON THE INTERNET**

AASB supports efforts to prevent children’s access to pornography on the Internet and encourages efforts to create a more positive, safe interactive electronic communications for children. AASB supports efforts to provide parents with the necessary information about the influence of the Internet in order to assist them in their decisions concerning all Internet access for their child. AASB also supports self-regulation in the industry encouraging providers of pornography to post rating labels and “black-out” pages requiring adult verification before access is granted.

**Rationale.** Pornography is highly prevalent on the Internet. The Internet allows access to material all over the world with very little regulation. Innocent searches for class or personal information can occasionally lead into pornography. With rating systems in place that would post a rating scale upon a search using an Internet search engine and voluntary “black-out” with adult verification, children’s access to inappropriate material will be limited. *Adopted 1997, 2002, Amended 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009 (Sunset Nov. 2013)*

### **3.5 VIOLENCE IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA AND ENTERTAINMENT**

AASB supports efforts encouraging and challenging the media, entertainment and advertising industries to develop more positive content for both children and adults that demonstrate nonviolent solutions to problems and respect for human life. AASB supports efforts to provide parents with the necessary information about the influence of media in order to assist them in their decisions concerning all of its influences upon their children. AASB also supports self-regulation within the industry by asking them to post rating labels on all videos and video games rented or sold by video merchants or loaned by public libraries, and prohibiting children under age of 17 from renting R-or X-rated videos, M-rated video games or attending R-or X-rated movies without parental permission.

**Rationale.** It is estimated that children who regularly watch television are exposed through news and entertainment programming to tens of thousands of violent assaults and deaths by the time they reach adulthood.

Analysis of multiple victim school shootings (Anchorage Daily News, June 21, 1998) indicates a commonality of these four factors: obsession with violent pop culture, a child who felt inferior or picked on (probably suicidal), easy access to guns, and ample warning signs. Reducing the violence will not eliminate the threat, but will work in conjunction with efforts directed at addressing the other three factors. *Amended 1998, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2007 (Sunset Nov. 2013)*

### **3.6 INHALANT, ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, METHAMPHETAMINES & OTHER DRUG ABU**

AASB calls upon the Legislature of the State of Alaska to accept its responsibility to provide leadership, and to provide the funding and support to assist local communities in their strength-based education, prevention and treatment efforts to combat inhalant, alcohol, tobacco, methamphetamines and other drug abuse, and to provide effective law enforcement to ensure laws pertaining to controlled substances are enforced. AASB also requests the State of Alaska make adequate funds available for community-based and residential efforts to address effective substance abuse treatment programs for children, young people and their families.

**Rationale:** Drug-related problems, including inhalant, alcohol, tobacco, methamphetamines and other drug abuse, are a major debilitating influence on the lives of the youth of Alaska. They have been proven to be the primary contributing factor in the alarming number of dropouts and youth suicides in the State of Alaska. Community-based prevention and intervention efforts are proving effective in combating drug-related problems. The treatment of children and young people is very different from the treatment of adults for substance abuse. Communities need adequate funds for effective substance abuse prevention and treatment programs. *Amended 1998, 1999, 2001, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 (Sunset Nov. 2013)*

### **3.7 INTERAGENCY COOPERATION AMONG SERVICE PROVIDERS SERVING CHILDREN**

AASB supports interagency information sharing within Federal Rights to Privacy requirements (FERPA, HIPPA) to ensure that children are able to come to school each day ready to learn, and to enable agencies to develop a cooperative treatment plan that involves appropriate school personnel.

**Rationale.** Children who receive services from social service agencies are already experiencing disruption in their lives. This disruption frequently makes it difficult for them to concentrate on their schoolwork. These students need to have educational skills to succeed in the world. Yet decisions are frequently made about the life of these children that do not take into account their educational needs.

When children are receiving services from multiple agencies, one agency will frequently have information that may be crucial to the service delivery of another agency and/or the child is receiving duplicating and sometime conflicting services from more than one agency. Addressing the needs of the whole child requires an improved delivery system, which is comprehensive, collaborative, child and family centered, and focused on prevention. *Amended 2001, 2002, 2005, 2007, 2008 (Sunset Nov. 2013)*

### **3.8 SUICIDE PREVENTION, EDUCATION AND TREATMENT EFFORTS**

AASB requests the Legislature to provide funding for statewide suicide prevention efforts coordinated among the peer helper programs, mental health centers, and village based suicide prevention efforts.

Prevention efforts should include a statewide program to bring professional mental health counselors on-site to visit schools or support school-based counseling programs.

**Rationale.** The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports that suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people 15 -19 years of age, (following unintentional injuries). The rate of teenage suicide in Alaska is much greater than the national average.

Suicide is often precipitated by depression, substance abuse, and separation from a significant other. Coordinated efforts among all agencies will be better able to present programs, which address mental health, coping skills in response to stress, substance abuse, employment, and healthy relationships.

Currently, 57 Alaskan communities participate in the Community-Based Suicide Prevention Program which allows each community to determine and implement the kind of project it believes is most likely to reduce self-destructive behavior. *Amended 1998, 1999, 2002, 2005, 2006, 2007 (Sunset Nov. 2013)*

### **3.9 SAFE, CARING AND CONNECTED SCHOOLS**

AASB supports efforts to provide a school environment that is free from weapons, harassment and intimidation, violence, drugs (including alcohol and tobacco), and other factors that threaten the safety of students and staff. Recognizing the importance of positive school climate and student connectedness to school as powerful influences on student academic success and on reducing youth risk behaviors, AASB urges the Legislature and state agencies to join AASB in supporting school district efforts to improve school climate and increase student connectedness to school.

**Rationale.** It is common sense that when students feel safe and welcome in school and are encouraged to learn, their attendance increases as well as their academic achievement. Research shows the clear association of school climate and student connectedness with positive academic outcomes and with reduced risk behavior and increased safety. AASB's School Climate and Connectedness Survey has provided a tool for districts to measure climate and connectedness factors. The survey also has provided Alaska data that aligns with national research. *Amended 1998, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2008, 2009 (Sunset Nov. 2013)*

### **3.10 SUPPORT OF STATE FUNDING FOR STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES IN ALASKA**

AASB recommends the Administration and the Legislature provide funding for school-based student health services.

**Rationale.** School nurses and other student health services are vitally important supports for student well-being and academic success. *Amended 2002, 2004, 2007, 2008 (Sunset Nov. 2013)*

### **3.11 HIV/AIDS AND OTHER STD EDUCATION**

AASB supports providing effective HIV/AIDS and other STD education programs for students and parents, and training for certified and classified school staff. AASB supports an effective and comprehensive education effort that focuses on reducing risk by emphasizing abstinence, healthy decision making and refusal skills. Such instruction may also include the use of barrier methods. An effective way to do this is to bring together a broad consensus of the community in order to develop and implement the district's HIV/AIDS curriculum on preventing HIV/AIDS and other STD.

**Rationale.** The impact of all STD's can be devastating. For instance, the dormancy of the HIV virus can be as long as 10 years and the statistics indicate that many young people are contracting the virus while in their teens. Health education should emphasize the consequences of contracting STDs, many of which are life-long. The instructions should not lull teens into careless and risky behavior. *Amended 1998, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2008, 2009 (Sunset Nov. 2013)*

### **3.12 EDUCATION OF STUDENTS IN RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIORS RELATING TO HUMAN SEXUALITY**



AASB encourages responsible behaviors relating to human sexuality by supporting programs that promote abstinence, develop healthy decision-making skills, teach refusal skills and promote prevention of pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

**Rationale.** The Youth Risk Behavior Study of 2007 indicates an increase in the number of students who reported that they had sexual intercourse at least once. In 2007, about 45 percent of high school students reported having had sexual intercourse, compared to 40 percent in 2003.

Research presented by the Search Institute and their "Building Assets in Youth" model has determined that a teen's belief "in the importance of abstaining from sexual activity and his/her willingness to postpone sexual activity" is significant to their personal and academic development. *Amended 1998, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2007, 2008 (Sunset Nov. 2013)*

### **3.13 IN SUPPORT OF THE ALASKA CHILDREN'S TRUST**

AASB fully supports the work of the Alaska Children's Trust, and urges all member school boards to promote the Trust and its efforts to address the tragic consequences of abuse, neglect, violence, and crime experienced by too many of Alaska's children. AASB urges the Legislature to support and increase the Children's Trust Endowment.

**Rationale.** The Alaska Children's Trust was established by the Legislature in 1988 with the mandate to promote initiatives that strengthen families and serve dependent children. The goal of the Children's Trust is to promote and provide opportunities so that Alaska's children can grow to responsible and productive adulthood. The Children's Trust will fund local programs that meet the needs and challenges of Alaska's families and children with innovative, efficient and effective services.

Today, the Trust's \$13 million (2007 annual report) endowment offers the opportunity to create a true "permanent fund for prevention." *Amended 1997, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003 (Sunset Nov. 2013)*

### **3.14 INCREASED SUPPORT OF ALASKA HEAD START PROGRAMS**

Alaska Head Start programs and services are a partnership between federal, state and community-level entities. The Association of Alaska School Boards supports and urges the Congress of the United States, the President, the Alaska Legislature, and the Governor to provide sufficient and consistent funding to make Head Start and Early Infant Learning available to all eligible young Alaskans, regardless of the number of children in the program.

**Rationale.** Project Head Start has had a beneficial impact on the academic, physical, social, and emotional development of impoverished pre-school students and their families throughout Alaska and the United States since its inception in the 1960's. A significant component of Goals 2000: Educate America and Alaska 2000 education initiatives is that all children will be properly prepared to start school.

Children at-risk who have benefited from a quality early childhood program spend 1.3 years less in some form of special education placement. They have been shown to score higher on such school readiness measures as verbal achievement, perceptual reasoning and social competence than other low-income children attending either another preschool or no preschool.

Head Start has immediate positive effects on children's socio-emotional development, including self-esteem, achievement, motivation and social behavior. Parents involved in Head Start have been shown to participate more in activities, including transition, than non-Head Start parents.

Within Alaska, 17 Head Start grantee agencies serve children and their families in 101 communities. A large number of eligible Alaskan children (estimated to be nearly 76%) remain unserved, due to lack of sufficient funding. AASB is encouraged by the addition of \$600,000 in state general funds to the \$6.8 million Head Start budget in FY 2009 and \$800,000 addition in FY 2010. The Head Start communities across Alaska contribute over \$4.2 million annually through in-kind support. *Amended 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2006, 2009 (Sunset Nov. 2013)*

### **3.15 SUPPORTING THE SAFE AND DRUG-FREE SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES ACT**

AASB urges the U.S. Congress to continue funding for the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act at levels adequate to support effective education, counseling and prevention efforts. The Association recommends that such valuable new initiatives as preventing violence in the schools be funded through separate appropriation.

**Rationale.** The Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act authorized federal appropriations to state and local education agencies to devise programming to provide drug use education, counseling, and abuse prevention services for America's young people. Programs funded through the Act are currently providing valuable services and will be needed for the foreseeable future.

Although violence in the schools is a serious issue and developing programs to combat it is an appropriate federal responsibility, any diversion of resources from the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act would cripple important drug education, counseling and abuse prevention programs that are only taking root and becoming effective. *Amended 1998, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2008, 2009 (Sunset Nov. 2013)*

### **3.16 REVISE PARENTAL PERMISSION REQUIREMENTS FOR QUESTIONNAIRES AND SURVEYS ADMINISTERED IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

AASB supports modifying the requirements for parental or legal guardian permission for a student to participate in a questionnaire or survey administered in a public school to make it easier for school districts to obtain the necessary permission.

**Rationale.** To be eligible and/or competitive for state and federal grants, and to effectively target programs to increase student achievement, school districts need school-by-school data to accurately assess the need and success of current efforts. As a result of the passage in 1999 of HB 70, schools are unable to obtain an adequate sample to provide reliable information. HB 130 (Wilson) and SB 101 (Davis) introduced in the 2009 session would modify restrictions to allow greater general information gathering by districts, provide sufficient notification to parents about student surveys and allow parents to opt out of anonymous student surveys. *Adopted 2001, Amended 2007, 2009 (Sunset Nov. 2011)*

### **3.17 STUDENT WELLNESS**

Good physical and mental health of children is essential if they are to take full advantage of the educational services offered by their school. AASB urges students, parents, educators, guardians, community groups, tribal entities and state and local agencies to collaborate on collective ways to ensure all children are prepared to learn through healthy eating habits, physical activity and access to adequate housing and health care. Due to the federally mandated Child Nutrition Act, funding to school districts should be increased to support adequate school services and programs to address those mandates. Specific school-based measures to reduce child overweight and obesity should include increased funding for school districts.

**Rationale.** AASB recognizes child wellness is also determined by circumstances outside the school, from the availability of good nutrition and physical activity to the ability of each family to provide housing and health care for their members. Obesity is a growing health threat to all generations of Alaskans; it increases the risks of chronic diseases and conditions such as heart disease, liver failure, diabetes, stroke, hypertension, some cancers and premature death. Therefore, community-based collaboration is essential for long-term success. *Adopted 2005, Amended 2006, 2008, 2009 (Sunsets Nov. 2010)*

### **3.18 PROMOTING EARLY CHILDHOOD BRAIN DEVELOPMENT**

AASB encourages legislative recognition that brain development in 0-3 year-old children critically impacts educational success. Failure to promote brain development in the very early years is impossible to overcome completely and poses a huge and costly challenge for school districts. AASB supports efforts to inform parents and families about promoting healthy brain development in their very young children and to provide related resources that support early brain development efforts.

**Rationale.** Success in education is largely dependent on the degree of brain development achieved from birth to age 3. Age appropriate, culturally relevant and native language supported resources need to be made available for families to stimulate proper brain development in order to increase children’s learning potential. Various public and private agencies, including school districts, should encourage collaborative efforts to provide information and effective, research-based resources to parents and guardians of very young children. The benefits of wise investment in young children will be substantial, and the consequences of poor investments costly. *Adopted 2005 (Sunsets Nov. 2010)*

### **3.19 SCHOOL ACTIVITY AND STATEWIDE TESTING SCHEDULES IN RELATION TO MAJOR RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS**

In advocating for the respect of cultural differences and in recognition of increasing diversity, AASB encourages the State of Alaska, school districts and the Alaska School Activities Association to schedule major school-sanctioned activities and statewide testing on days that do not conflict with major religious holidays.

**Rationale.** As of this time, Christmas and Easter do not have major sporting events or other activities for students scheduled for these holidays. In its advocacy role, AASB can influence ASAA, individual school boards and the Department of Education & Early Development to refrain from scheduling student activities, sporting events and statewide testing the Jewish High Holy Days (Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah), holidays associated with Islam (Eid, the end of Ramadan), Russian Orthodox Christmas and Easter and other major holidays of our communities’ faith organizations. *Adopted 2007 Amended 2009 (Sunsets Nov. 2012)*

### **3.20 INTERVENTIONS AND SANCTIONS THAT REDUCE LOSS OF CREDIT**

AASB supports amending AS 14.30.171 to allow school district personnel to reduce or mitigate suspensions or expulsions based on attendance and participation in appropriate interventions.

**Rationale.** SB 48, an act relating to recommending or refusing psychotropic drugs or certain types of evaluations or treatments for children, was adopted by the legislature in 2006. It does not currently allow school district administration to reduce the number of days for suspensions or expulsions, if there is a program or evaluation in place. The loss of credit and loss of intervention programs negatively impact communities. *Adopted 2007 (Sunsets Nov. 2012)*

### **3.21 ACCOUNTABILITY FOR FUNDING FOR STUDENT LEARNING & STUDENT NEEDS**

AASB member districts thank the Alaska State Legislature for increasing the foundation formula. AASB member districts take seriously their charge to be responsible for state education dollars received and the importance of student learning. Districts agree to provide timely information to AASB when asked to provide information for surveys or other documentation.

**Rationale.** Legislative members continuously ask AASB to provide information on how districts are spending education funds. AASB member School Districts are urged to compile district information on use of state education funds, to participate in surveys by AASB asking for information in order to advocate for funding for Alaska students. *Adopted 2009 (Sunsets Nov. 2014)*

## **PERSONNEL**

### **4.1 SUPPORT FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

AASB supports funded opportunities and sufficient resources for quality and relevant staff preparation and demonstrably effective continuing development in both urban and rural settings for those educating Alaska's public school students. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Pre-service: State training programs through postsecondary and other institutions (e.g. RANA–Rural Alaska Native Adult education program out of Alaska Pacific University and REPP–Rural Education Preparation Program out of University of Alaska Fairbanks);
- Expanding Department of Education & Early Development packaged training programs for all school districts to use in providing consistent mandated training to employees and in meeting the requirements of the new federal law, No Child Left Behind;
- Quality in-service programs at the local district level;
- Necessary training for paraprofessionals and special needs educators.

**Rationale.** Perhaps the greatest factor affecting the ability of the state's students to master Alaska's student performance standards is the quality of the teacher who delivers classroom instruction to the student. Compounding this critical concern is the shortage of qualified teachers, administrators and paraprofessionals. Issues such as teacher, administrator and paraprofessional recruitment, distribution, preparation, and in-service continue to impact the supply and retention of qualified staff. While the state has recently increased efforts to attract teachers and staff from both conventional and non-traditional sources and to more effectively prepare teachers, the promise of these efforts has yet to reach most school districts. *Adopted 2002, Amended 2004 (Sunsets Nov. 2012)*

### **4.2 NATIONAL CERTIFICATION OF TEACHERS**

AASB supports efforts to establish a financial incentive mechanism for state support of teachers and districts wishing to participate in the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) process. State support for this resolution should be outside the foundation formula. Additional incentives to attract NBPTS teachers to under-performing schools should be considered.

**Rationale.** NBPTS is an organization of teachers, administrators, board members, and other education stakeholders working to advance the teaching profession and to improve student learning. The mission of the NBPTS is to establish high and rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do. Linked to these standards will be a new generation of fair and trustworthy assessment processes that honor the complexities and demands of teaching. The NBPTS certification process is offered on a voluntary basis for teachers wishing to demonstrate exemplary performance around the five core propositions:

- Teachers are committed to students and their learning.
- Teachers know the subjects they teach, and how to teach those subjects to students.
- Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring students learning.
- Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.
- Teachers are members of learning communities.

These standards are well aligned with the Alaska State Board of Education adopted teaching standards. *Adopted 1998, Amended 2007 (Sunsets Nov. 2013)*

#### **4.3 TIERED LICENSURE**

AASB urges the state Board of Education and Early Development to reconsider its regulations for tiered licensure to take into account costs – both money and effort – as well as effects on recruitment and actual improvement in teacher quality generated.

**Rationale.** Alaska issues approximately 3,000 certificates to teach each year. They are good for three years. After that period, teachers must satisfy a variety of requirements, including a performance review by EED. If teachers pass the review, they are entitled to a Professional Certificate good for five years. In June of 2005, the state Board of Education and Early Development passed regulations implementing tiered licensure for new teachers in Alaska. While teachers bear the primary responsibility for securing their licenses, AASB is concerned about adequate support and assistance from the State EED. AASB also believes the state should develop alternative methods for documenting teacher competency. The resistance by teachers and districts to some features of the tiered licensure system has raised worries about its impact on recruitment and retention of teachers. *Adopted 2005, Amended 2008, 2009 (Sunsets Nov. 2012)*

#### **4.4 THE ALASKA STATEWIDE MENTOR PROJECT**

AASB applauds the willingness of veteran educators to serve as mentors to Alaska's teachers and principals. While this state training program has been launched with federal grants, AASB believes that more secure funding should be identified to continue professional staff mentoring and to expand to the district level in future years, and that there is an evaluation process in place to monitor the effectiveness of the mentor.

**Rationale.** Surveys have shown that far too many teachers and principals leave the profession within their first five years out of frustration or lack of success. Mentors who serve to provide advice and support during these critical early years are a proven remedy to this drop-out phenomenon. Alaska should invest money in mentoring programs to ensure that they exist into the future, when federal funds may not be available. *Adopted 2005, Amended 2008 (Sunsets Nov. 2010)*

#### **4.5 SPECIAL EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES TRAINING**

The Association of Alaska School Boards promotes the establishment and expansion of postsecondary educational programs to train additional individuals as certified special education teachers and the initiation of programs to train related services providers (i.e. school psychologists, physical therapists, and speech therapists) within our state university system.

Academic programs to train special education-related service providers are not currently available within Alaska. Therefore, AASB supports providing financial relief while attending professional certification programs elsewhere to Alaska residents who are committed to providing services to children in Alaska public schools.

**Rationale.** The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 (IDEA-97) mandates appropriate educational services be provided to all certified special education students; the Assistance to States for the Education of Children with Disabilities (34 C.F.R. Part 300), Section 300.381 identifies the role of "the State (to) undertake (activities) to ensure an adequate supply of qualified personnel including special education and related services personnel...necessary to carry out the purposes of this part;" and, the Assistance to States for the Education of Children with Disabilities (34 C.F.R. Part 300), Section 300.382 identifies the role of "Each State plan (to) include a description of the procedures and activities the State will under take to ensure that all personnel necessary to carry out this part are appropriately and adequately trained...to include a system for continuing education of regular and special education and related service personnel to meet the needs of children with disabilities."

School districts throughout the State of Alaska are having difficulty meeting the educational requirements of our special needs students due to a significant shortage of certified special education personnel. Furthermore, the University of Alaska has limited special education and related services professional preparation program opportunities available to individuals aspiring to become certified special education or related service professionals. *Adopted 1998, Amended 1999, 2000 (Sunsets Nov. 2013)*

#### **4.6 ADDRESSING THE TEACHER, SPECIALIST, AND ADMINISTRATOR SHORTAGE**

The Association of Alaska School Boards urges the Alaska State Legislature, Alaska State Board of Education, and Teacher Education Programs in Alaska's universities to address the severe shortage of teachers, specialists, and administrators in the State of Alaska.

Suggested strategies may include:

- Incentives (salary bonuses, loan forgiveness, loan assumption, competitive retirement benefits, interest rate reduction, etc.);
- State supported marketing and licensure assistance to recruit teachers;
- Flexibility in certification requirements and reciprocity;
- Improve availability and/or quality of teacher housing;
- Mentoring programs for new teachers;
- Rehire of retired (RIP'd) teachers and administrators;
- Professional support/development.

**Rationale.** It has been painfully demonstrated that a severe shortage of teachers, specialists, and administrators is being experienced in the school districts in every region of Alaska. Attracting and retaining quality teachers has become a critical issue facing school districts as they work to improve education in Alaska's public schools.

A teacher's job satisfaction is gauged by a number of factors, including a sense of accomplishment, professional support, decent living conditions, and adequate compensation/benefits. The degree to which Alaska meets these needs is a statement of the value we place on our educators. *Adopted 1999, Amended 2000, 2001, 2005, 2008 (Sunsets Nov. 2013)*

#### **4.7 REPEAL THE SOCIAL SECURITY GOVERNMENT PENSION OFFSET AND WINDFALL ELIMINATION PROVISION**

AASB supports the elimination of two little known amendments to the Social Security Act that unfairly penalize certain public employees by reducing earned retirement benefits. They are the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP).

**Rationale.** The Government Pension Offset and Windfall Elimination Provision unfairly reduce the Social Security rights of at least one-third of America's education workforce, including Alaskans enrolled in either the Teacher's Retirement System or the Public Employees Retirement System.

In 1977, Congress began treating government pensions, such as those earned by educators, as Social Security benefits. The Government Pension Offset (GPO) reduces an individual's Social Security survivor benefits (available to a person whose deceased spouse had earned Social Security benefits) by an amount equal to two-thirds of his/her public pension.

In 1983, Congress enacted the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP). It changes the formula used to figure benefit amounts – reducing an individual's own Social Security benefits (earned while working in a job covered by Social Security). For example, a teacher taught 17 years in one state, then moved to a different state and taught another 14 years. According to the Social Security Administration, she earned monthly benefits of \$540 per month for her contributions paid into the Social Security system while she worked in the first state. Because public employees in the second state do not participate in the Social Security system, her actual monthly benefits will be cut \$196 due to the (WEP). She will receive \$344 per month from Social Security instead of the \$540 she earned.

Congress further tightened the law in 2004 through passage of PL 108-203) which eliminated the "last day covered employment exemption" to the government offset provision. The law requires that the last 60

months of a person's government employment be covered by Social Security and the pension system in order to avoid reduction under the GPO. *Adopted 2002, Amended 2007 (Sunsets Nov. 2012)*

#### **4.8 RELATING TO DEFINED BENEFIT RETIREMENT**

AASB supports reestablishment of defined benefit retirement for educational employees at a price affordable to Alaska school districts.

**Rationale.** Secure retirement benefits are important for recruiting the best personnel to Alaska schools. *Adopted 2005 Amended 2008 (Sunsets Nov. 2010)*

#### **4.9 RELATING TO HEALTH CARE COSTS AND MEDICAL INSURANCE**

AASB calls upon the Legislature and the Congress to address health care costs in Alaska and the U.S.

**Rationale.** In Alaska more than 110,000 residents have no medical insurance, and the price of treatment is increasing. In the U.S. 45.8 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 percent of the budget. This growing budget category mitigates districts' ability to directly impact student achievement through classroom focused expenditures. *Adopted 2005 (Sunsets Nov. 2010)*

#### **4.10 SUPPORTING USE OF LICENSED PROFESSIONALS TO FACILITATE SERVICES BY ELECTRONIC MEANS**

AASB supports the use of electronic means by licensed professionals to facilitate the monthly supervision of paraprofessionals as they implement the related service goals in a student's individual education plan.

**Rationale.** In most of Alaska's smallest schools, very few students are enrolled in speech therapy, occupational therapy or physical therapy, and very few professionals are available to provide these services. The result is often the use of paraprofessional personnel to provide these services. One solution would be for a waiver of state laws to allow the supervision of these paraprofessionals by licensed professionals via virtual means. *Adopted 2005 (Sunsets Nov. 2010)*

#### **4.11 SCHOOL PERFORMANCE INCENTIVE PROGRAM**

AASB has always endorsed the goals behind **a school performance incentive program** ~~the state's School Performance Incentive Program~~. We continue to encourage schools and districts to engage all staff to strive for student academic growth and continued high performance. AASB requests the State Board of Education & Early Development, in conjunction with AASB, to research, identify and evaluate school incentive programs that promote student achievement in a fair and productive manner.

**Rationale.** It is important for Alaska's school districts to be aware of successful school performance programs that contribute to student achievement and support school staff. Having this knowledge helps us be informed advocates on school reform issues. *Adopted 2009 (Sunsets Nov. 2014)*

#### **4.12 OPPOSING MANDATED ALASKA READING COURSE**

AASB opposes as unnecessarily burdensome any proposal to require all teachers, regardless of content, grade level, previously proven expertise, or current assignment, to successfully complete the Alaska Reading Course or pass its assessments to receive or renew certification.

**Rationale.** Reading is fundamental to student success and all teachers should have the professional preparation to assist students in becoming proficient readers. Requiring all teachers to take a particular reading course hampers the ability of districts and individuals to focus professional development on what will benefit students most. The logistics of administering the reading course and/or assessments to all certificated staff is an unfunded mandate requiring time and resources, when staff development and district improvement plans already address strategies to improve reading. *Adopted 2007. Amended 2008 (Sunsets Nov. 2012)*

#### **4.13 URGING THE STATE OF ALASKA TO REINSTATE THE RETIRE-REHIRE PROGRAM**

The State of Alaska and AASB recognize that there is a limited labor pool for some jobs in K-12 education and that AS 14.20.135 is a good tool to fill critical positions. AASB urges the Alaska Legislature to reinstate AS 14.20.135, the "retire-rehire" law.

**Rationale.** Passage of HB 161 in 2005 included a 2009 sunset date for employees working under a waiver through the retire-rehire program for positions that difficult to recruit. The law established rules regarding the recruitment process that must be used in hiring a retire-rehire employee; it requires employers to provide health insurance for the employees and to make contributions to the unfunded liability of the retirement system for the employees. After July 1, 2009, all employees hired under a waiver must cease employment with the State of Alaska or school districts, or they may continue working in their current jobs but cease collecting retirement benefits.

The retire-rehire program was initiated for good reasons, including the increasing difficulty in filling some highly specialized positions and the need for Alaska to offer competitive salaries and benefits for skilled workers. Those reasons continue to exist despite the arbitrary deadline established in the sunset clause. An irony of the law is that a skilled worker in another state can retire there and move to Alaska to accept a waiver position in public employment, but a skilled worker in Alaska cannot compete for the same job. *Adopted 2008, Amended 2009 (Sunsets Nov. 2013)*

#### **4.14 ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS TO CERTIFY HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS**

AASB supports an interim study by the Department of Education & Early Development to determine alternative pathways for certifying teachers as highly qualified, with a particular focus on the need for teachers to be highly qualified in multiple subject areas in small rural high schools. The study should be conducted with participation from rural districts.

**Rationale:** The current highly qualified regulations established in the state accountability plan require a teacher to be highly qualified in each subject. In disciplines such as science and social studies, teachers maybe required to become highly qualified in Government and in History and in Social Studies. Science teachers must similarly be highly qualified in Chemistry and in Biology and in Physical Science and in Physics and in Geology. Rural school staffing patterns cannot support one teacher for each subject, let alone for each area within a discipline. In schools where one or two teachers must handle the entire secondary program, the additional preparation required to become highly qualified compounds teacher workloads, contributing to teacher burnout and turnover. *Adopted 2008 (Sunsets Nov. 2013)*

## **EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

### **5.1 SCHOOL-TO-WORK PROGRAMS**

The Association of Alaska School Boards strongly supports adequate and equitable funding for the implementation of school-to-work programs, including school-to-work centers, career and technical education, and career technical student organizations, while ensuring resources to satisfy needs and requirements of all academic programs at the same time.

**Rationale.** Both the U.S. Department of Education and the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development have endorsed and encouraged districts to offer school-to-work programs.

The implementation of school-to-work programs inevitably results in additional expenses that are not part of the standard budget schedules of school districts and secondary schools. Increased costs include, but are not limited to: purchase of equipment and materials related to occupations, transportation for students between schools and workplaces, training for staff members, release time for staff members, new staff positions (school-to-work coordinator, transition specialist, job coach), insurance and workman's compensation costs.



There are a large number of students in rural villages that do not complete high school or job training programs. There is a need to provide school-to-work programs like the Rural Student Vocational Program (RSVP), which was eliminated in 1998, or innovative regional residency centers to enhance opportunities for these students. At the same time, school-to-work programs must integrate and ensure basic academic achievement. *Amended 1999, 2002, 2008 (Sunsets Nov. 2013)*

## **5.2 CURRICULUM EXPANSION VIA TECHNOLOGY**

AASB urges the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development (EED) and other entities to support, coordinate and encourage distance delivered education programs for students and teachers in partnership with local districts using existing facilities whenever possible, and supports funding for the purchase and installation of distance delivery education equipment and the bandwidth to support it. Other delivery methods must be made available until connectivity issues have been solved statewide.

**Rationale.** All school districts need to have the capability to offer a variety of courses for all students, including the remedial student, vocational student, the student who left school without graduating, and the college bound student. The technology exists to provide satellite instruction throughout the United States.

In order to take classes otherwise not available, students who attend small high schools must leave their community or take correspondence classes. There are examples in the state of success in delivering such courses utilizing technology. Many districts in the state are exploring the use of current technology in the form of distance delivery. Programs that are currently being offered in local districts could be utilized by other districts in-state, or substituted for purchased programs now in use, with funding and support provided by EED.

Expanding distance delivery could also help meet the needs of "highly qualified" teachers and paraprofessionals under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. *Amended 2001, 2002, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 (Sunsets Nov. 2013)*

## **5.3 NATIVE LANGUAGE PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT**

AASB supports state funding for staff training, program development and materials preparation to promote Native language instruction for those districts that desire Native language programs. AASB also urges Congress to clarify the No Child Left Behind Act to bring it into compliance with the Native American Languages Act and to support opportunities for American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander students to retain and use Native American languages, including adequate funding for federal programs that can support Native language instruction.

**Rationale.** The heritage languages of the Indigenous Peoples of the United States have become endangered. The extinction of languages would further erode the rich heritage of the Indigenous Peoples of the United States. The technology exists to provide satellite language instruction in the Native tongues to communities throughout the United States. If we as a nation do not respond to this need to preserve this rich linguistic heritage, these languages will become extinct. Financial support from the government for the preservation of Native languages would enable the use of a technology that has helped speed the loss of indigenous languages to reverse that trend. In today's modern world technology and global issues make it necessary for our children to become proficient in English. Learning English, however, should not be at the expense of indigenous language programs. *Amended 1998, 1999, 2004, 2008 (Sunsets Nov. 2013)*

## **5.4 COMMUNITY SCHOOL PROGRAMS**

AASB recommends that the Community Schools Act of 1980 be reinstated and the state explore independent funding status for Alaska's Community School programs.

**Rationale.** AASB recognizes that *Community School Programs* extend the concept of public education beyond the traditional K-12 program of "schooling" and views everyone in the community as both teacher and learner. Tight budgets and state demands for strict accountability have placed community schools programs in competition with district academic priorities. *Amended 2001, 2004, 2008, 2009 (Sunsets Nov. 2013)*

## **5.5 INCREASING STUDENT CONTACT TIME**

The Association of Alaska School Boards supports allowing school districts to expand the school day or to expand the school year, with adequate state funding, to account for state mandated student testing, professional development, collaboration/planning, and/or increased instructional contact time, according to local district needs.

**Rationale.** The lack of time is identified as one of the top challenges facing schools when it comes to effective schooling and raising student achievement. Education Summit of 2000 participants identified the need for more time to align curriculum, more student contact time (day/week/year), more teacher preparation time, more time for professional development, reducing the loss of instructional time. This would allow more time for remediation efforts, ~~and~~ time to communicate test results, ~~and~~ work with public expectations and collaborate with appropriate entities.

In addition, policymakers have decreased student contact time through state mandates that require additional testing days and related professional development requirements that potentially impact student achievement. The most important challenge is an inadequate amount of time on task by students. Educators need time to make sure that each student has a solid foundation before moving him/her to the next level. *Adopted 2000, Amended 2001, 2002, 2003, 2008 (Sunsets Nov. 2013)*

## **5.6 MODIFICATION OF THE ALASKA CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT**

AASB urges the Alaska state legislature to direct and fund the Department of Education & Early Development and the Alaska Board of Education to convene a study of the implications of the current Certificate of Achievement law and desirability of modifications to reflect actual student achievement and avoid disadvantages relative to graduation requirements of other states. The results of the study should be presented to the legislature for consideration of changes in the current law.

**Rationale.** Alaska's graduation standards are higher than many other states. Students with an Alaska Certificate of Achievement may know and be able to do more than graduates from other states. Alaska Certificate of Achievement holders are unfairly denied access to post secondary and employment opportunities compared to students from other state. At very least the Certificate of Achievement should delineate actual competencies. *Adopted 2006. Amended 2008. (Sunsets Nov. 2011)*

## **5.7 ENCOURAGING CIVIC EDUCATION IN SCHOOL DISTRICTS**

AASB encourages member districts to develop well-articulated curriculum for civic education (local, state and national in a global context) for students and provide effective teaching strategies for civic instruction.

**Rationale.** In HCR 6, the 25<sup>th</sup> Alaska Legislature noted that residents place a high priority on meaningful civic learning in our schools, and "it is the responsibility of each generation of Americans to teach the next generation how democracy works." While some schools in Alaska have developed excellent civics education curriculum, the legislature declared that "there has been a steady decline in the attention paid to advancing civic learning opportunities, locally, statewide and nationally." AASB believes that civics content can be integrated into reading, writing and math instruction without diminishing attention to tested subjects. AASB believes civics education should be a matter for local districts, rather than a statewide mandate. A citizens task force studying the issue of improving civics education in Alaska schools met in 2008 and gave an oral report to the legislature. It was a preliminary report. AASB encourages the legislature to facilitate the task force completing its report *Adopted 2007. Amended 2008, 2009 (Sunsets Nov. 2012)*

## **5.8 REQUESTING THE ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT TO PROVIDE STANDARDS-BASED ASSESSMENTS IN THE ALASKA NATIVE INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE**

AASB requests the state to provide standardized assessments in the Alaska Native indigenous languages, as requested by the individual districts.

**Rationale.** Students who have a strong first language in their ethnic group perform better academically. Students who learn English as a second language with a strong first language do better academically on standardized tests. Culturally responsive curriculum that uses the local language and cultural knowledge

provides the foundation for the rest of the curriculum and implements the goals of the State of Alaska's Cultural Standards. *Adopted 2007 (Sunset Nov. 2012)*

### **5.9 SUPPORTING REGIONAL VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTERS**

AASB supports funding regional vocational training and higher education centers, both new and pre-existing, to support the goals of public education. Centers could establish partnerships with the private sector to help fund training programs leading to employment of students in a broad range of careers.

**Rationale.** The existing system of funding vocational education has failed to provide appropriate vocational training opportunities in schools across the state. *Adopted 2008 Amended 2009*

### **5.10 URGING FLEXIBILITY IN TESTING REGIMES TO SUPPORT INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE PROGRAMS**

AASB urges the Alaska Legislature to join with school districts in opposing those aspects of the **Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)** ~~No Child Left Behind Act~~ that are detrimental to rural, largely Native school districts, including testing regimes that inaccurately assess Alaska Native and rural Alaska students. English Language Learner (ELL) mandates inaccurately assess Native Alaska students and inadvertently target language programs. In addition, AASB urges the state to reexamine its own testing programs with regard to these issues.

**Rationale.** The current ~~ESEA NCLB~~ reauthorization process is an opportunity to improve the existing law. **Since 2001, ESEA has** ~~NCLB lacked~~ the flexibility needed to support English Language Learners in indigenous communities. ELL programs disadvantage indigenous communities that wish to perpetuate their values, culture and traditions in their public schools through their language. The State of Alaska and the U.S. Department of Education have not established appropriate psychometric instruments to measure the fluency of indigenous language speakers. *Adopted 2008*

### **5.11 SUPPORTING UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR ALASKA'S 3- AND 4-YEAR-OLD LEARNERS**

AASB lends its full support to fully implementing and funding a voluntary education program for every 3- and 4-year-old child in Alaska.

**Rationale.** The foundation of cognition is established early in childhood, and research clearly demonstrates the efficacy of educational programming for 3- and 4-year-olds. Access to these programs is important for every child in Alaska. *Adopted 2008*

### **5.12 ENCOURAGING DISTRICTS TO ADOPT STANDARDS FOR PARENT/FAMILY INVOLVEMENT PROGRAMS**

AASB encourages districts to develop, implement and regularly evaluate their parent involvement programs using, as a model, the National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs supported by the National School Boards Association and more than 40 other national education, health and parent involvement groups and developed by National PTA in cooperation with education and parent involvement professionals.

**Rationale.** AASB has affirmed the importance of parent involvement in Belief Statements B.11, B.17 and B.18. The No Child Left Behind Act also recognizes the significance of and requires effective parent involvement programs that incorporate the six National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs, including communicating, parenting, student learning, volunteering, school decision-making and advocacy and collaborating with the community to engage parents, provide parents with clearly and timely information about NCLB and develop effective advocates. *Adopted 2008*

### **5.13 URGING CONTINUATION OF THE ALASKA NATIVE EDUCATION ACT**

AASB urges Congress and the President to support continuation of the Alaska Native Educational Equity, Support and Assistance Act **as a critical way to engage families and communities in better supporting student success, and align school and community efforts to create safe, healthy and opportunity-rich environments that support a high level of success for all students.**

**Rationale.** Since its adoption in 2002 as Title 7 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (NCLB), the Alaska Native Education Act has provided supplemental benefits to Alaska school districts and Alaska Native students. Congress recognized then that too many Alaska Native children enter and leave the school system with serious educational handicaps, including low test scores and high drop-out rates. The Alaska Native Education Act was enacted and funded to address these problems through improved curricula, better teaching practices, family literacy programs, cultural exchanges, community engagement programs and career preparation activities.

**The Alaska Initiative for Community Engagement is a statewide initiative that effectively enlists families, school boards, districts, schools, educators, Alaska native organizations, businesses, community organizations, artists and arts organizations, faith communities, and young people themselves in improving the academic and social outcomes for youth.** The success of this investment in Alaska Native students is evident in a 2009 report by the American Institutes for Research. The report on the impact of the Alaska Initiative for Community Engagement (Alaska ICE), which is funded through the Alaska Native Education Act, shows positive changes, especially for Native students, in schools and communities supported by Alaska ICE, including an increased level of expectations of Native students, improvements in school climate, increased levels of adult support for youth in the community, significantly reduced risk behaviors (including vandalism, fights, alcohol and drug use) and higher proficiency rates on statewide academic assessments. *Adopted 2009*

#### **5.14 RELATING TO THE CAREER ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENT**

AASB endorses the State of Alaska's WorkKeys Assessment for students as a useful means of determining preparedness for the workplace or college.

**Rationale.** HB 206 in the 26<sup>th</sup> Alaska Legislature would require districts to include the WorkKeys Assessment scores on every graduate's transcript and graduation certificate. The intent of the bill is to give high school students a final year of school to improve upon specific skills for employment or college qualification. The assessment may be more useful to students if it were offered during the 10<sup>th</sup> rather than the 11<sup>th</sup> grade. The assessment could be an option to or a substitute for parts of the current High School Graduation Qualifying Exam. Further study to address implementation and funding should be required before mandating the assessment. *Adopted 2009*

#### **5.15 RELATING TO POSTSECONDARY CLASSES FOR SECONDARY STUDENTS**

AASB believes that students who wish to do so should be allowed to take college credit or vocational school credit classes while they are in high school, but not at the mandated expense of their school districts. The state should consider funding appropriate post-secondary vocational or college courses for high school students.

**Rationale.** HB 206 allows students who have passed the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam to take college credits or vocational school credits at the expense of their school districts. It is in the interest of the state to help students maintain interest in school and advance toward a college degree or vocational education certificate. The cost for this post-secondary education should not be required to be borne by school districts. Therefore, it is reasonable to ask the state to fund these courses. *Adopted 2009*

#### **(NEW) 5.16 EXIT EXAM**

AASB supports a review of the wisdom and suitability of the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam.

**Rationale.** Alaska is one of 25 states that administer a high school exit exam. Passage of the HSGQE has been a requirement for all high school seniors in Alaska since 2004. The test measures basic student competency in math, English and reading. Supporters of the HSGQE include those who believe it is an important inducement to students to achieve basic academic proficiency and one measure for schools, parents and employers to measure a student's preparedness to enter college or the work place. Critics of the HSGQE include those who believe it is a poor measure of academic proficiency, leads to loss of student interest in school after the test is passed in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, and for a limited number of students is a needless bar to receiving a full high school diploma.