



# WHERE WE STAND

## 2007 Belief Statements & Core Resolutions

WITH STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR CONSIDERATION AT THE JULY 2007  
AASB BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

# WINTER STAND

ADMINISTRATIVE

OFFICE

1990

# -Table of Contents-

## BELIEF STATEMENTS BY SUBJECT AREA

|               |                           |   |
|---------------|---------------------------|---|
|               | <u>GOVERNANCE</u>         | <u>PAGE 4</u>   |
| (Amend title) | B.1                       | Local Control   |
|               | B.2                       | Binding Arbitration   |
|               | B.3                       | Advisory Board Training   |
|               | B.4                       | School Board Member Training  |
|               | B.5                       | Class Size  |
|               | <u>FUNDING</u>            | <u>PAGE 5</u>   |
|               | B.6                       | Educational Programs and Funding as Top Priority                              |
|               | B.7                       | Unfunded Mandates   |
|               | B.8                       | Meeting School Facility Needs for Alaska Students                             |
|               | <u>CHILD ADVOCACY</u>     | <u>Page 5</u>   |
|               | Preamble                  |   |
|               | B.9                       | Child Advocacy Mission Statement  |
|               | B.10                      | Language, Cultural and Ethnic Diversity                                       |
|               | B.11                      | Increase in Family and Parental Involvement in Schools & Educational Programs |
|               | B.12                      | Supporting Sobriety   |
|               | B.13                      | Prevention/Early Intervention   |
| (Amend)       | B.14                      | Prohibiting Persons Convicted of Sexual Abuse from Serving on School Boards   |
|               | B.15                      | Declaring Children Alaska's Top Priority                                      |
|               | <u>PERSONNEL</u>          | <u>PAGE 6</u>   |
|               | B.16                      | Alaska Native Teacher Hire & Retention  |
|               | <u>EDUCATION PROGRAMS</u> | <u>PAGE 6</u>   |
|               | B.17                      | Early Childhood Education   |
|               | B.18                      | Educational Improvement   |

## AASB CORE RESOLUTIONS BY SUBJECT AREA

|       |                   |   |
|-------|-------------------|---|
|       | <u>GOVERNANCE</u> | <u>PAGE 8</u>   |
|       | 1.1               | Pledge of Allegiance  |
|       | 1.2               | Opposing Mandated School Consolidation  |
|       | 1.3               | Opposition To Mandated Borough Formation  |
|       | 1.4               | Maintaining Local Control in Charter School Formation   |
|       | 1.5               | School Vouchers   |
|       | 1.6               | Centralized Treasury: Distribution of Allocated Funds for Schools and Interest Earned   |
|       | 1.7               | School Improvement & Student Achievement  |
|       | 1.8               | Accountability for Home-Schooled Students Outside the Public School System  |
|       | 1.9               | Compulsory Attendance Law   |
|       | <u>FUNDING</u>    | <u>PAGE 12</u>  |
| (New) | 2.1               | Sustained, Reliable and Adequate Educational Funding for Alaska's Students Through a Nonvolatile Funding Source   |
|       | 2.2               | Extraordinary Loss Protection   |
|       | 2.3               | <del>Education Funding Formula Adequate to Bring All Alaska Students to Proficiency or Beyond</del><br><b>Supporting the Findings of the Legislative Education Funding Task Force</b> |
|       | 2.4               | Financial Support of Statewide Strategies for Academic Achievement  |
|       | 2.5               | AASB Advocacy on Individuals With Disabilities In Education Act (IDEA)  |
|       | 2.6               | Funding Standards-Based Early Learning Programs in Alaska   |
|       | 2.7               | Funding for Intensive Needs Pre-School and Other Intensive Needs Students Enrolling Post-Count Date   |
|       | 2.8               | Following the Capital Improvement Project Priority List for Non-Bonded Projects   |

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| 2.9                | Local Contribution in the School Funding Formula                              |
| 2.10               | Education Endowment   |
| 2.11               | Instructional Technology  |
| 2.12               | School Construction Debt Retirement for Bonded Indebtedness                   |
| (Amend Title) 2.13 | Revenue Sharing & The Community Dividend                                      |
| 2.14               | Emergency State Funding for REAA Fuel Storage and Transfer Facilities         |
| 2.15               | Pupil Transportation  |
| 2.16               | Funding for School District-Operated Regional Boarding Home Programs          |
| 2.17               | Funding for Transient Students in Schools                                     |
| 2.18               | Insurance Costs   |
| 2.19               | Financial Exigency For Reduction in Force                                     |
| 2.20               | Increased Formula Funding   |
| (Amend) 2.21       | Legislative Financial Relief for Ongoing TRS and PERS Employer Rate Increases |
| 2.22               | Modification of Minimum Instructional Expenditure Requirement                 |
| 2.23               | Energy Cost Relief  |
| (Amend) 2.24       | Timber Receipts Loss Offset Program   |
| 2.25               | Reliable & efficient service by the Alaska Marine Highway System              |
| 2.26               | Forward Funding for Schools   |

CHILD ADVOCACY

PAGE 22

|      |   |
|------|---|
| 3.1  | Declaring Children the Top Priority of Alaska   |
| 3.2  | Promoting Development Assets in Alaska's Children   |
| 3.3  | Fetal Alcohol and Drug Exposed Students   |
| 3.4  | Preventing Access to Pornography on the Internet  |
| 3.5  | Violence in Electronic Media and Entertainment  |
| 3.6  | Inhalant, Alcohol, Tobacco, Methamphetamine & Other Drug Abuse  |
| 3.7  | Interagency Cooperation Among Service Providers Serving Children                                      |
| 3.8  | Suicide Prevention  |
| 3.9  | Safe Schools/Safe Communities   |
| 3.10 | Support of State Funding for Teen Health Centers in Alaska  |
| 3.11 | HIV/AIDS Education  |
| 3.12 | Education of Youth for Healthy Sexual Decision-Making   |
| 3.13 | In Support of the Alaska Children's Trust   |
| 3.14 | Increased Support of Alaska Head Start Programs   |
| 3.15 | Supporting the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act  |
| 3.16 | Revise Parental Permission Requirements for Questionnaires and Surveys Administered in Public Schools |
| 3.17 | Student Wellness  |
| 3.18 | Promoting Early Childhood Brain Development   |

PERSONNEL

PAGE 28

|      |   |
|------|---|
| 4.1  | Support for Staff Development   |
| 4.2  | National Certification of Teachers  |
| 4.3  | Tiered Licensure  |
| 4.4  | Mentoring   |
| 4.5  | Special Education and Related Services Training   |
| 4.6  | Addressing the Teacher, Specialist and Administrator Shortage                           |
| 4.7  | Repeal the Social Security Government Pension Offset and Windfall Elimination Provision |
| 4.8  | Relating to Secure Retirement Benefits  |
| 4.9  | Addressing Health Care Costs and Medical Insurance                                      |
| 4.10 | Supporting Use of Licensed Professionals to Facilitate Services by Electronic Means     |
| 4.11 | School Performance Incentive Program  |

EDUCATION PROGRAMS

PAGE 33

|             |                                     |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| 5.1         | School-To-Work Programs             |
| 5.2         | Curriculum Expansion Via Technology |
| (Amend) 5.3 | Native Language Program Development |
| 5.4         | Community Schools                   |
| 5.5         | Increasing Student Contact Time     |

|       |     |  |
|-------|-----|--|
|       | 5.6 | Modification of the Alaska Certificate of Achievement                                    |
|       | 5.7 | Seeking Clarification on the Native American Languages and the No Child Left Behind Acts |
| (New) | 5.8 | Encouraging School Districts to Emphasize Civics Education                               |

## 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 CONTROL GOVERNANCE**

Public education is the responsibility of the states and of the local school boards created there under. This system of local school board governance is one of the purest examples of democracy in action today, in that, school boards 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*

|                       |
|-----------------------|
| Recommendation: Adopt |
|-----------------------|

|   |
|---|
| Discussion: Word change better defines issue of concern |
|---|

#### **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 *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.

## **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. As such, it is the largest entitlement program. 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 03, 05, 06*

### **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 additional school space and major school maintenance. *Amended 1998, 02, 06*

## **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. Realizing that it takes a whole community to educate a child, encourage the legislature, tribal governments, agencies, organizations, businesses, communities, congregations, extended families, 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, 06*

### **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, and in doing so, encourages tolerance and pride without isolating or alienating a particular group. *Amended 1998*

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

AASB believes, and research supports the belief, the single most important factor in student achievement is parental, family and guardian involvement in the educational process, both at home and in the schools. AASB strongly feels family involvement in the education of children is of highest priority and encourages school districts to initiate contact with families in a culturally responsive way. Research has shown that family involvement at home, in schools and educational programs enhances student success. *Amended 2003, 06*

### **B.12 SUPPORTING SOBRIETY**

AASB encourages our students and parents to help in overcoming our communities' affliction with alcohol and drugs. AASB has long supported schools and communities that are alcohol and drug free through various efforts 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; encourage and support sober role models.

### **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 in prevention and intervention services. *Amended 2002, 06*

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

AASB believes that persons convicted of sexual abuse should be legally prohibited from serving on a school board or REAA school advisory boards while required to maintain registration as a sex offender under AS 12.63.010.020. School board members should serve as role models for students and staff. *Amended 1998,*

Recommendation: Adopt

Discussion: Added language recommended by Resolutions Committee in November 2006, but dropped inadvertently from report prior to floor vote of full conference membership

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

AASB believes children are the top priority of the state. This declaration extends to the safety, health, education and future of our children. *Adopted 2005, amended 06*

## **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.

## **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 to develop early childhood programs, which target at risk children and include a parent and family involvement component. *Amended 1998*

### **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*

## PERSONNEL

### 5.10 ALASKA NATIVE TEACHER HIRE & RETENTION

Those have shown that Native teachers have had a very positive effect on Native students. The need and response to qualified Alaska Native teachers has long been reported by educational and Native organizations. AASB strongly urges school districts to recruit qualified Alaska 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 incentives to provide incentives to encourage Native students to enter education as a part of study and to more actively enter the teaching and retention of Native teacher hires and retention.

## EDUCATION PROGRAMS

### 5.11 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Millions of children 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 high learning opportunities for a variety of reasons. The Governor of Alaska's Special Report on Early Childhood Education and Development includes a report on early childhood programs which suggest that children who receive a quality and early intervention component.

### 5.12 EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT

AASB believes the content of a quality educational improvement plan should address the following five key areas:

- **Parental involvement:** Schools encourage a high degree of parental involvement in all aspects of their child's education. Participation of parents in their child's education is essential for the child's success. Schools should provide opportunities for parents to provide feedback on their child's education. Schools should provide a "work class" education accountability to the public to ensure desired results.
- **Community engagement:** Schools involve many different sectors of the community in the school's program. The expansion of school systems and promote the shared responsibility of adults in our communities in improving Alaska's youth to achieve academic success, engage in positive, thriving behaviors and reduce unwanted behaviors.
- **Student standards:** Schools should develop and implement educational programs to meet high standards and desired competencies. They should be defined by a variety of groups that meet the diverse needs of students and progress toward the continuing and productive careers in a rapidly changing world.



# AASB CORE RESOLUTIONS

## GOVERNANCE

|  |
|--|
| Recommendation: Continue all resolutions in this section |
|--|

|                                     |
|-------------------------------------|
| Discussion: Note 2007 sunset of 1.1 |
|-------------------------------------|

### 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. 2007)*

### 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. 2008*)

### 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, 03 (*Sunset Nov. 2008*)

#### 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, 99, 03 (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

#### 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. 2008)

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

AASB urges the Legislature to provide 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 02, 04 (Sunset Nov. 2008)

### 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 improving the federal No Child Left Behind Act 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, as well as their performance in relation to predetermined levels of academic proficiency. Other changes to the law should be aimed at ensuring state and local control over requirements for "highly qualified" teachers for every class, especially in small schools; state and local capacity to effectively address school improvement and student achievement goals; that improvement plans are given sufficient time to take hold before applying sanctions; and that funding of Title I and other programs are raised to the levels required by these recommendations without reducing expenditures for other educational programs.

**Rationale.** In the five years since passage of NCLB, 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 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. The NAEP assessment is the national assessment. Nationally normed tests, such as Terra Nova, that are not aligned to Alaska state standards should not be mandated.

### 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 testing for 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 and state designators, public schools will be 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, 03 06 (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

### 1.9 COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE LAW

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. AASB 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. Enforcement of any compulsory attendance law is a challenge, but parents and students can and should be held accountable.

**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 students who have not yet graduated from high school stay in school and have more opportunities to meet performance standards and pass the HSGQE. Mandatory attendance laws must be enforced, but not all school districts are able to afford a truancy officer and not all communities in Alaska have law enforcement or judicial agencies to address the issue. *Adopted 2001, Amended 2002, 03, 04, 05, 06 (Sunset Nov. 2011)*

## **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. 2007)*

Recommendation: Continue

Discussion: Provides a general statement of support for a long-term fiscal plan. Note passage by the House in 2007 of HB 125, requiring the governor to submit a 10-year balanced-budget plan. SB 134 (Wilken) declares CBR and Permanent Fund surplus earnings as source for future budget shortfalls, but no action on bill.

### **2.2 EXTRAORDINARY LOSS PROTECTION**

The Legislature should enact a "safety net" for school districts to offset a loss of state formula funding due to extraordinary changes outside the control of the districts such as an extraordinary decline in enrollment, either district-wide or at an individual school that falls below a specified funding threshold after contracts are in place.

**Rationale.** Schools districts are exposed to extreme hardship from an unbudgeted loss of funds due to an unanticipated sharp decrease in enrollment. School districts are not forward funded and are not currently allowed to carry more than 10 percent of their budget forward.

Districts do not know how much state revenue they will actually receive until after the first of November, by which time their greatest cost – teacher salaries – are largely locked into place for the year. Districts are required under current laws to notify tenured teachers of their contractual status for the following school year by March 16 of the preceding school year.

The loss of funding communities can have large, unexpected negative effects on the budget of the district. In 2003 several school districts suffered funding shortfalls, which consequently caused multiple financial catastrophes and serious personnel issues. *Adopted 2003. Amended 2004. (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

Recommendation: Continue

### **2.3 EDUCATION FUNDING FORMULA TO BRING ALL ALASKA STUDENTS TO PROFICIENCY AND BEYOND**

The Association of Alaska School Boards urges the Legislature to provide sustainable and adequate funding to allow all districts to bring their students to proficiency and beyond. Sustainable funding requires the immediate implementation of a revised area cost differential that more accurately reflects the higher cost of operating schools in

Alaska. Funding in the FY 07 foundation program should be considered the base for FY 08, and an additional increment should be provided to fully implement the 2005 ISER area cost differential. Any adjustment to the area cost differential should be accompanied by an increase to the base student allocation for all districts, to better assure adequate funding for all districts regardless of the cost differential adjustment. AASB believes that special education intensive needs programs should be funded based on need and that districts should have a second count period for intensive needs students who enroll after the count date. AASB also believes that bilingual, special education intensive needs and vocational education programs should be funded separately and at levels adequate for quality programming. Furthermore, the legislature should fund a separate line item for districts that provide services to students during the summer

**Rationale.** In Alaska, *accountability measures* under the Quality Schools Initiative have created continuous, increasing financial demands on school districts. The initiative mandates K-1 grade screening, standards-based assessments and the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam. It requires implementing and integrating state school and educator performance standards. It calls for a School Designator system requiring schools to show improvement over a period of time. All districts have been increasing the amount of resources directed to student testing and remediation. Additional resources have been necessary to have classes taught by NCLB "highly qualified" teachers, especially in small schools. Many districts have expanded summer school offerings to meet the increased needs to support students in passing the HSGQE. Furthermore, providing necessary instruction during the summer months provides for a more efficient use of the substantial capital invested in our school facilities. AASB urges the Alaska State Legislature to reconsider the funding level for "intensive needs" children receiving special education as block grant funding provides an inadequate level of support. Also, combined block grant funding for special education, vocational education, and bilingual education programs is inappropriate because it fails to account for real differences among the costs of services for each student category. Instead, AASB supports funding special education, bilingual and vocational education programs separately based on need. Since passage of SB 36 in 1998, the area cost differential has been adjusted only once. Continued inaction threatens the integrity of the foundation formula program and the ability of many school districts to cope with higher operating and labor costs.

At the federal level, the reauthorization of ESEA "No Child Left Behind Act" 2001 has huge fiscal implications for Alaska schools. Already, Alaska districts are being required to provide additional supplemental services for students in Title 1 schools deemed failing, and to provide parents with the choice to send their children to another school at district expense. Also, Congress has stepped back from earlier pledges to fully fund the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). We urge the Alaska Legislature to support full federal funding of these two Acts. These state and federal mandates should receive an adequate, ongoing, consistent source of funding. *Adopted 2002, 03 Amended 04, 05, 06 (Sunset Nov. 2007)*

### **(NEW) 2.3 SUPPORTING THE FINDINGS OF THE LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION FUNDING TASK FORCE**

AASB endorses the recommendations of the Legislative Education Funding Task Force in its report of Aug. XX, 2007.

**Rationale.** The foundation funding program for K-12 schools is driven by the Base Student Allocation. While the BSA has been increased steadily since 2004, most of the increase has been devoted to offsetting higher retirement costs for the PERS-TRS system. The 1998 law (SB 36) instituting the BSA included a District Cost Factor for schools outside of Anchorage, with the proviso that the legislature revise the cost factors every two years. To date, that revision has not occurred. The same inaction has caused state support for intensive needs students to become woefully inadequate.

AASB advocates revisions to the foundation program that provide for increases to the Base Student Allocation, the District Cost Factor, and Intensive Needs, and the 20 percent block grant for vocational, bilingual and special education programs. These improvements, when coupled with a statutory commitment by the state to funding the PERS-TRS cost increases, will provide school districts with the financial stability to meet higher state and federal standards for public education.

Recommendation: Adopt new resolve.

Discussion: This is a placeholder to position AASB to speak to the findings of the task force. The current resolution contains out-of-date language

## 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 the following strategies:

1. Increased learning time 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.

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 01, 02, 03, 04 (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

Recommendation: Continue

## 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 pay 40% of the costs associated with educating children with disabilities. According to the National School Boards Association, federal funding accounts for approximately 16% of the necessary funding. The remainder comes directly from the regular instructional program of local school districts. Nationwide in FY 2006, the total under-funding of IDEA was estimated at \$12.4 billion.

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, 02, 03, 04, 05 (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

Recommendation: Continue

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

AASB supports legislation to add additional funding for early learning programs in Alaska and that legislation be introduced that includes early learning program planning and funding for Pre-school-12 facilities in Alaska.

**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 and state designators, the legislature will be accountable for paying the cost of missing the opportunity to reach children at the age when the greatest gains in mental development are possible. 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.

The state offers no 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, 02, 04 (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

Recommendation: Continue

## 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. *Adopted 2003. Amended 04, 05, 06 (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

Recommendation: Continue

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

AASB strongly advises the legislature to follow the priority list for non-bonded projects as presented by the Department of Education and Early Development with no adjustments, deletions, or additions that would not otherwise be of an emergency basis.

**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. The legislature in recent times has not followed the priority list as presented. *Adopted 2000, Amended 2001, 04 (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

Recommendation: Continue

### 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 05 (Sunset Nov. 2011)*

Recommendation: Continue

### 2.10 EDUCATION ENDOWMENT

AASB lends its full support to the concept of an educational endowment to 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. ~~Inflation and fixed costs have eroded the value of the foundation formula by approximately one-third during the past decade.~~

~~Adequate funding of education is ranked as a high priority by Alaskans. A recent Curriculum Management Audit of Alaska's largest school district found "overall fiscal support for education in Alaska is tenuous," and that financial uncertainty deters long-range planning that is critical to significant educational improvement.~~ An educational endowment will provide a proven, secure, and dedicated fiscal resource for future public education funding for our state, and allow long-range education planning with confidence in the availability of that resource. *Amended 1998, 99, 02 (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

Recommendation: Continue.

Discussion: Deletion of language in rationale will remove out-dated statements

### 2.11 INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY

AASB is encouraged by and grateful for the Legislature's commitment of \$5 million in the 2007 capital budget to support the AASB Consortium for Digital Learning. This appropriation will enable 18 school districts involving nearly 2,500 students and teachers to pilot the integrated use of laptop computers on a 24/7 basis. Future investments in the Consortium by the Legislature are essential to allow all students access to the expanded learning opportunities provided by digital learning inside and outside the school environment. Because of the global economy that our youth will experience, 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 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. 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. *Amended 1998, 99, 01, 04, 06 (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

Recommendation: Continue

## 2.12 SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION DEBT RETIREMENT FOR BONDED INDEBTEDNESS

AASB calls upon the Legislature and the administration to fully honor all past commitments for bonded indebtedness reimbursement and to meet future school construction needs by extending and continuing to fully fund the school debt reimbursement program.

**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 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 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. In the past these good faith agreements have sometimes not been fully honored, placing a heavy burden on local taxpayers. This aforementioned tax burden has created a hardship for taxpayers and resulted in a loss of local revenue for classroom education.

Voters who passed Proposition C in 2002 have a justified expectation that the general obligation bonds approved by their communities will continue to be partially reimbursed at the level promised by the state. *Amended 1998, 01, 02, 03, 04 (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

Recommendation: Continue

## 2.13 REVENUE SHARING & THE COMMUNITY DIVIDEND

Municipalities play a large part in financing education and providing community services necessary to student learning. Steep reductions in Municipal Revenue Sharing & Assistance programs have had and continue to have a serious impact on public schools. The Association of Alaska School Boards supports restored and increased funding for Municipal Revenue Sharing & Assistance, while recognizing that an increase in community support cannot substitute for necessary increases in direct education funding.

**Rationale.** State funding to municipalities has been decreasing annually. The loss of state aid to municipalities reduces the services they are able to provide, including funding of schools. These decreases are also forcing communities to raise taxes to offset state mandates. Support for this program is essential.

~~An alternative way to fund the Municipal Revenue Sharing & Assistance program is the concept of a Community Dividend—creating a mini permanent fund for Alaska municipalities which would distribute the interest earned in the form of a Municipal Dividend. This idea was forwarded by the Alaska Municipal League, and looks promising. *Adopted 1999, Amended 00, 01, 04 (Sunset: Nov. 2008)*~~

Recommendation: Amend title

Discussion: The Alaska Municipal League has dropped the community dividend concept from its proposed legislation.

## 2.14 EMERGENCY STATE FUNDING FOR REAA FUEL STORAGE AND TRANSFER FACILITIES

AASB requests emergency state funding for upgrades of state-owned fuel storage and fuel transfer facilities in REAA school districts where there is an imminent environmental and safety hazard.

**Rationale.** State-owned fuel storage and fuel transfer facilities in school districts across Alaska are aging and, because of the harshness of the environment, are deteriorating rapidly. The potential for disastrous leakage and spillage is extremely high as that deterioration continues and escalates.

Stringent regulations, both state and federal, mandate significant penalties for school districts suffering fuel spills from state-owned facilities. Replacement costs for aging systems are astronomical and far beyond the funding allocations prescribed by the state for schools. Emergency state funding is crucial to avoiding looming financial and environmental disasters, and in some districts, serious environmental health problems. *Adopted 2000 (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

Recommendation: Continue

Discussion: Sunset next year of this resolution may be well-timed. Alaska Energy Authority reports upgrading and replacing fuel storage and transfer facilities in 58 villages. AVEC also has conducted similar improvements. Denali Commission funding of \$170 million funded most of the projects, but that funding is due to run out soon

## 2.15 PUPIL TRANSPORTATION

AASB urges the State of Alaska to fully fund pupil transportation under the new per-student funding mechanism, modifying that mechanism 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 AS114.09.010 to remove the cap and provide adjustments to the transportation grant program reflective of transportation mandates and operating expenses.

**Rationale.** Providing access to public education via transportation is a major responsibility for schools. The new transportation funding mechanism, adopted in July 2003 caps the per-student allocation at the FY03 level with inflationary adjustments established at one-half the Anchorage CPI in FY05 and FY06. This adjustment is programmed to fall behind ordinary general inflation and is particularly inadequate in the face of rapidly-rising fuel and other operating costs.

Pupil transportation is an important part of overall school funding. AASB requests that there be no short funding of this critical element. Districts need an adequate block of funds to provide safe access to schools and to ensure that districts are not forced to use instructional funding to meet the cost of transportation obligations. *Adopted 2000, Amended 2001, 02, 03, 06 (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

Recommendation: Continue

## 2.16 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.** 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 a larger, regional boarding high school operated by a school district.

The State of Alaska currently provides paid tuition and paid room and board for village students desiring to attend Mt. Edgecumbe School if they have no access to a high school program at their grade level in their village community, but also without regard to local availability of high school programs. It also provides students within urban settings with the opportunity to attend the state run boarding school. The number of students requesting enrollment at Mt. Edgecumbe School exceeds the space available.

Many students in small village high schools now desire the educational and extra-curricular opportunities found at larger, centralized high school sites. The distance from Northern and Interior villages, to Mt. Edgecumbe, however, may deter some students from enrolling. Galena, Nenana, and other districts now offer boarding school programs that provide an alternative to some areas of the state. *Amended 1997, 00, 01, 02, 03, 04, 05 (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

Recommendation: Continue

## 2.17 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.

**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. *Adopted 2002. Amended 2003. (Sunset Nov. 2007)*

Recommendation: Continue

Discussion: The mechanism for attaching funds to individual students is uncertain. Each student does have a state identification number, but the procedures for notifying the state of student transfers is unevenly followed by districts, according to EED. This may be because the original host district is not eager to remit state funds following the transfer of a student.

## 2.18 INSURANCE COSTS

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

**Rationale.** Alaska Public Entity Insurance reports worker's compensation is up on average 5 percent during the fiscal year starting July 1, 2006. Health insurances have also increased by 30% to 250% per year over the last five years. 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, have added to escalation of fixed costs faced by districts.** *Adopted 2002. Amended 03, 06 (Sunset Nov. 2007)*

Recommendation: Continue

Discussion: Health and liability insurance far outpaces other coverage in cost increases.

## 2.19 FINANCIAL EXIGENCY FOR REDUCTION IN FORCE

Every Alaska school board must and does use enrollment and revenue projections in the development of annual budgets. The Association of Alaska School Boards supports clarification of the law explicitly to allow the use of projections of enrollment and revenues as valid bases upon which to develop a plan for reduction in force under AS 14.20.177. The term "financial exigency" must be defined in statute to specifically allow the use of projections to give districts the latitude to adequately plan a quality educational program that meets the needs of students.

**Rationale.** The Haines/Hoonah layoff lawsuit brought by NEA-Alaska in 2003 has far reaching implications for all school districts during an economic downturn. School districts, like corporate America, utilize revenue and other types of projections to determine staffing levels and program offerings. Districts must be able to project to make decisions about staffing because they do not have "actuals." The largest component of a district's budgetary commitment is to personnel. Without the use of projections to determine operational costs, districts could be placed at financial risk.

This lawsuit seeks to disallow declining enrollment and declining revenue projections as a reason to lay off employees, which may be necessary to reorganize the district educational program. NEA-Alaska is making the case that reductions in enrollment or revenue must have already taken place in order to lay off staff.

Tenured staff must be notified of non-retention before March 16 and non-tenured staff on or before the last day of the school term. State law requires school districts to determine a budget for the following fiscal year by May. The level of statewide school district funding, however, is often not known until June after the governor considers the state operating budget passed by the Alaska State Legislature, and the level of funding a particular district will receive is not known finally until the October count date. If lay-off notices must go out in March or June of the preceding school year and lay-offs are allowed only after attendance has decreased, districts would be required to retain a teacher surplus a full year after enrollment has declined. *Adopted 2003. Amended 04, 05, 06 (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

Recommendation: Continue

## 2.20 INCREASED FORMULA FUNDING

AASB calls on state policy makers to appropriate funding adequate to meet the needs of Alaska's youth, as mandated by state and federal law.

**Rationale.** 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. AASB is committed to do its part to ensure success, but also note that an increase in formula funding will remain inequitable unless the accuracy of the area cost differential is also addressed.

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 04, 05 (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

Recommendation: Continue

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

The Association of Alaska School Boards supports seeking a legislative financial solution for school districts and other political subdivisions of the state, including the Special Education Service Agency and the Southeast Regional Resource Center, to fully fund ongoing TRS and PERS mandated employer retirement rate increases. Those districts affected by the eroding floor should also be reimbursed for 100 percent of their PERS/TRS liability. Furthermore, the AASB calls on the Alaska Legislature to address this crisis as its first order of business and to submit a financial solution to the Governor by February 15, 2007. *out of Date*

**Rationale.** Districts simply do not have the capacity to handle the massive unfunded liability of the state's retirement programs. Without supplemental funding to cover the unprecedented huge increases in retirement costs these increases will directly reduce the instructional effort districts can pay for and harm Alaska's children. Funding for ongoing actuarially sound retirement costs should be included in the base allocation, while unfunded liability should be addressed separately at the state level. *Amended 04, 05, 06 (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

Recommendation: Amend

Discussion: Passage of SB 125 establishing lower employer rates for PERS & TRS staff is pending in the Senate Rules Committee

## 2.22 MODIFICATION OF MINIMUM INSTRUCTIONAL EXPENDITURE REQUIREMENT

AASB requests modification 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 04, 05 (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

Recommendation: Continue

Discussion: EED lobbied the 25<sup>th</sup> Alaska Legislature for relief from AS 14.17.520, but the Senate expressed continued support for the 70 percent rule.

## 2.23 ENERGY COST RELIEF

AASB urges the Alaska State Legislature to take action, through increased or supplemental funding to K-12 schools and the University of Alaska, to mitigate the huge increase in energy costs.

**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 70/30 requirement. This relief should be based on actual fuel cost. *Adopted Nov. 2005, Amended 06*

Recommendation: Continue 2.23

#### **2.24 TIMBER RECEIPTS LOSS OFFSET PROGRAM**

AASB urges the State of Alaska to take a proactive approach to the scheduled shortfall of timber receipts from federal lands in Alaska. Specifically, the Legislature should urge the federal Congress to extend by one year the present program or provide supplemental state funding to schools impacted by the loss of timber receipt funds.

**Rationale.** Congress recognized in 2000, with passage of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act, that declining timber receipts from federal lands posed a serious problem for local schools and road programs. The law established a national safety net based on historic timber revenue levels of approximately \$350 million a year. Reauthorization of the safety net has stalled in Congress though a move is afoot to extend the program by one year pending consideration of reauthorization. We would urge the legislature and the state of Alaska to use its influence to push for the year's extension (HR 617 and S-267) While Congress was successful in 2007 in extending the program for one year through passage of PL 110-28, the future of the program beyond that is uncertain. The Legislature and the State of Alaska should use its influence to extend the program beyond 2007, and failing success in that effort consider using state funds to prevent losses of essential school programs, teaching positions, administrative support and educational infrastructure. *Adopted 2006*

Recommendation: Amend

Discussion: New language updates the resolution to reflect current events

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

AASB urges the State of Alaska to provide frequent, reliable and efficient ferry service to all Southeast 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*

Recommendation: Continue

#### **2.26 EARLY AND/OR FORWARD FUNDING FOR SCHOOLS**

AASB supports early forward funding for schools prior to the date that school districts must retain or non-retain tenured teachers and submit official budgets. This would require governor approval of legislation prior to the legal date for non-retention of tenured teachers. To end the forced disruption of staff with layoff notices due to uncertain funding, the Legislature must take up and complete education funding with a special appropriation early in the legislative session or during the prior year's legislative session.

Alternately, AASB supports forward funding to eliminate non-productive guess-work budgeting that even funding earlier in the same legislative session would not cure. The Legislature could increase stability, certainty and efficiency in school district budgeting by passing an updated base student allocation appropriation out of current year funds for the second following fiscal year.

**Rationale.** Every Alaska school board uses enrollment and revenue projections in the development of annual budgets. Tenured staff must be notified by non-retention status before March 16 each year, and non-tenured staff on or before the last day of the school term.

Local funding entities (boroughs and cities) must receive budgets from schools to establish their own contributions. To project budgets without knowing the state contribution to budgets puts districts in a position that creates huge amounts of speculation, dissent and disruption of employee lives, which could be avoided if funding were known in a more timely fashion. Funding certainty one year ahead will reduce administrative cost and enable school districts to focus on student instruction for greater achievement.  
*Adopted 2006*

|                          |
|--------------------------|
| Recommendation: Continue |
|--------------------------|

## **CHILD ADVOCACY**

|  |
|--|
| Recommendation: Continue all resolutions |
|--|

|   |
|---|
| Discussion: Note amendment to rationale of 3.16 to reference specific legislation |
|---|

### **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*

### **3.2 PROMOTING STUDENT SUCCESS THROUGH SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING**

AASB encourages each neighborhood, congregation, community, school district, tribal entities and state agency to review the research in order to advocate, initiate and sustain programs of social and emotional learning that build assets in Alaska's children and teens and incorporate culturally responsive awareness.

**Rationale.** Research (What Kids Need to Succeed—40 Developmental Assets by Benson, Galbraith & Espeland); (Developmental assets: A synthesis of the scientific research on adolescent development, Scales and Leffert, 1999) shows that effective schools, families, faith communities, and all adults in our communities can contribute to the positive development of youth. The difference between troubled teens and those leading healthy, productive, and positive lives, is strongly affected by the presence of what is labeled "developmental assets." These assets are cumulative, meaning that the more a young person has, the better. Forty of these assets were identified – 20 exist in the teen'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 teens 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 teenagers have the more likely they are to succeed in school, to be involved in their community and to exhibit empathic and caring behaviors.  
*Amended 1998, 02, 03, 06 (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

### **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)/Fetal

Alcohol Effect (FAE) 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 FASD/FAE children.

**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, psycho-social and learning problems. Alaska's public schools must provide educational services to all children regardless of handicap. 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 FAS, 10 are born with FAE, and are difficult to identify.

Children with FASD/FAE often require special instructional strategies and materials. The educational identification and service of children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder/Fetal Alcohol Effect children is extremely expensive. Funding support for education of handicapped children is already barely sufficient to meet the needs of those children currently identified. *Amended 1998, 00, 02, 03, 04, 06 (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

### **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 computing environment for children. 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. 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 internet access for their child.

**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, 02 Amended 2004 (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

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

AASB supports efforts encouraging and challenging the media and entertainment industry, including manufacturing, to develop more positive content for both children and adults that demonstrate nonviolent solutions to problems and respect for human life. 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. AASB supports efforts to provide parents with the necessary information about the influence of media in order to assist them in their decisions concerning its influences upon their children.

**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, 99, 01, 03, 04, 05 (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

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

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 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 inhalant, alcohol, tobacco, methamphetamines and other drug abuse. There is a need for adequate funds for effective substance abuse treatment programs, particularly for inhalant abuse. In addition, law enforcement and judicial agencies are under-staffed and under-funded, and are thus unable to address the illegal use of drugs and alcohol in many of Alaska's communities. *Amended 1998, 99, 01, 05, 06 (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

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

AASB supports the development of a state policy on children and youth to ensure that the needs of the whole child are addressed in a comprehensive manner. This can be done by:

- Urging the State of Alaska to develop protocols protecting each family's right to privacy but establishing criteria for need to know;
- Partnerships between schools, mental health, and other services to ensure that children are able to come to school each day ready to learn, and enable agencies to develop a cooperative treatment plan that involves appropriate school personnel;
- Incentives for interagency cooperation, including the removal of barriers that limit interagency collaboration and the flexibility to coordinate funds;

**Rationale.** Children who need to or are receiving services from social service agencies are already experiencing dislocation in their lives. This dislocation 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, 02, 05 (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

### **3.8 SUICIDE PREVENTION**

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 counselors on-site to visit schools.

**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, 99, 02, 05, 06 (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

### **3.9 SAFE SCHOOLS/SAFE COMMUNITIES**

AASB supports efforts to establish a positive school climate—by training children in peaceful conflict resolution and youth violence prevention—that reinforces nonviolent solutions to problems and respect for all students and staff. 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. AASB supports school districts and their communities in developing plans and strategies to implement "Safe Schools" plans in all schools.

**Rationale.** All children have a right to attend schools that are safe and free from violence. Recent reports and surveys document an alarming increase in the incidence of school violence in all types of communities, particularly student-on-student violence. As school board members we must share the responsibility by involving the resources of the community to work for solutions.

Designated School Safe Zones are just one example of programs and laws that work, and have been supported by schools. *Amended 1998, 99, 01, 02 (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

### **3.10 SUPPORT OF STATE FUNDING FOR TEEN HEALTH CENTERS IN ALASKA**

AASB recommends the Administration and the Legislature provide funding for school-based Teen Health Centers.

**Rationale.** Of the 45 states that have school-based health centers, Alaska is one of only 12 states that does not provide financial support for these activities.

The Juneau Teen Health Center, the only one in Alaska, is a collaborative effort of four local agencies, started in 1992. The Health Center, located in the Juneau-Douglas High School, has provided approximately 700 health care visits each year to students. 45% of the total visits have been for emotional health reasons. A majority of student health care visits are made solely because the Health Center is sited in the high school. *Amended 2002, 04 (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

### **3.11 HIV/AIDS EDUCATION**

AASB supports providing effective HIV/AIDS education programs for students and parents, and training for certified and classified school staff. AASB supports an effective education effort that focuses on reducing risk by emphasizing abstinence, healthy decision making and refusal skills. 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.

**Rationale.** 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 that advances in medical treatment that prolong and improve life with AIDS not lull teens into careless and risky behavior. *Amended 1998, 00, 01, 02, 04 (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

### **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 2003 indicates a substantial improvement in the behavior of youth in a statewide survey, with rates for smoking, consumption of alcohol and marijuana, and sexual intercourse. In 2003, about 40 percent of high school students reported having had sexual intercourse, compared to 47 percent in 1995. About 28 percent of students were currently sexually active, compared to 30 percent in 1995. Teen birth rates have also decreased, from a high of 72 births per 1,000 15-19-year-old girls in 1991 to 43 births per 1,000 in the same age group during 2001.

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, 01, 02 04 (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

### **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 \$9.2 million endowment offers the opportunity to create a true "permanent fund for prevention." *Amended 1997, 99, 01, 02, 03 (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

### **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. The Head Start communities across Alaska contribute over \$4.2 million annually through in-kind support. *Amended 1998, 99, 00, 01, 02, 06 (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

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

AASB urges the U.S. Congress to continue funding for the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act. The Association recommends that such valuable new initiatives as preventing violence in the schools be funded through separate appropriation.

**Rationale.** The 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 significant problem, and developing programs to combat it is an appropriate federal responsibility, any diversion of resources from the 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, 00, 01, 02, 04 (*Sunset Nov. 2008*)

### **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 by making it easier for school districts to obtain the necessary permission. As a result of the passage in 1999 of HB 70, schools are unable to obtain an adequate sample to provide reliable information.

**Rationale.** 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. HB 207 (Wilson) introduced in the 2007 session would loosen restrictions to allow greater general information gathering by districts but also provide notification to parents about student surveys. *Adopted 2001 (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, 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.

**Rationale.** School districts participating in federally subsidized nutrition programs will be required to establish a local school wellness policy by the beginning of the 2006-07 school year, under terms of the 2004 reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act. The policy must include goals for nutrition education, physical activity and other school-based programs that are designed to promote wellness in a manner deemed appropriate by local districts. But AASB recognizes that 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. Therefore, community-based collaboration is essential for long-term success. These additional requirements will incur costs to districts contrary to AASB Belief Statement B.7 Unfunded Mandate. *Adopted 2005, Amended 06*

### **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*

## 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 04 (Sunset Nov. 2007)*

*Continue*

Recommendation: Continue

### 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.

**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. *Amended 1998 (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

Recommendation: Continue

#### 4.3 TIERED LICENSURE

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 carefully monitor and evaluate the implementation of the program and consider development of alternative methods for documenting teacher competency.

**Rationale.** As a performance-based system, tiered licensure holds the potential of raising the success of teachers and students and elevating quality instruction as a top priority. When combined with the state's teaching mentoring program, the tiered licensure system can improve public education. Like any new program, tiered licensure requires careful analysis and implementation to guarantee success, including new teacher compliance with terms of NCLB. *Adopted 2005*

Recommendation: Continue

#### 4.4 MENTORING

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*

Recommendation: Continue

#### 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, 00 (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

Recommendation: Continue 4.5

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

The Association of Alaska School Boards does hereby urge 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, 01, 05 (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

Recommendation: Continue

#### **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 (Sunset Nov. 2007)*

Recommendation: Continue

#### **4.8 RELATING TO SECURE RETIREMENT BENEFITS**

AASB supports further study of a way to supply guaranteed retirement, health and pension benefits for new teachers at a price affordable to Alaska school districts.

**Rationale.** Secure retirement benefits are important for recruiting the best personnel to Alaska schools. *Adopted 2005*

Recommendation: Continue

#### **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*

Recommendation: Continue

Discussion: Specific bills aimed at this problem include SB 160 (French) mandating a health insurance pool for uninsured Alaskans; and HB 140 (Gara) and SB 87 (Wielechowski) increasing the number of children covered by Denali Kid Care

#### **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 Nov. 2005.*

Recommendation: Continue

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

AASB endorses the goals behind the state's School Performance Incentive Program and encourages schools and districts to engage all staff to strive for student academic growth and continued high performance.

**Rationale.** Passage of HB 13 in the 2006 legislative session provided \$5.8 million to reward school personnel for their students showing growth to academic proficiency or continued high performance. The law specifically exempted these salary bonuses from the terms of collective bargaining or retirement benefits. The voluntary program is a welcome alternative to educational incentives that penalize schools and students for not performing. *Adopted 2006*



Recommendation: Continue 4.11

Discussion: First-year awards from EED to districts is scheduled for Aug. 14 announcement.

## **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, vocational programs, and career technical student organizations, while ensuring resources to satisfy requirements of the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam and demands of the No Child Left Behind law 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, 02 (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

Recommendation: Continue

### **5.2 CURRICULUM EXPANSION VIA TECHNOLOGY**

AASB urges the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development (EED) and other entities to support and encourage its 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.

**Rationale.** All school districts need to have the capability to offer a variety of courses for all students, including the remedial student, vocational student, 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, 02, 03, 06 (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

Recommendation: Continue

### 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 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 languages of the Indigenous Peoples of the United States have become endangered. The extinction of these languages would further erode the rich heritage of the Indigenous Peoples of the North American Continent. 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, the language 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. *Amended 1998, 99, 04 (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

*rework § 5.77 NSBA Resolution*

Recommendation: Amend

Discussion: The added language mirrors a pending resolve of the NSBA

### 5.4 COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

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

**Rationale.** AASB recognizes that *Community Schools* extends 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 may place community schools in competition with district academic priorities. Other states fund community schools in a variety of ways and this independent model may save community schools in the future. *Amended 2001, 04 (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

Recommendation: Continue

### 5.5 INCREASING STUDENT CONTACT TIME

The Association of Alaska School Boards supports expanding the school day or extending the school year, with adequate state funding, to account for state mandated student testing, professional development, collaboration/planning, and/or increased instructional contact time.

**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 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, entering school at a younger age, 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, 02, 03 (Sunset Nov. 2008)*

Recommendation: Continue

## 5.6 MODIFICATION OF THE ALASKA CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT

AASB urges the Alaska state legislature 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.

**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 may be unfairly denied access to post secondary and employment opportunities compared to students from other state unless the Certificate of Achievement can equate what they know. *Adopted 2006*

Recommendation: Continue

## 5.7 SEEKING CLARIFICATION ON THE NATIVE AMERICAN LANGUAGES AND THE NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACTS

*allow to sunset*

Enlist the support of Congress, the Alaska State Legislature, the National School Boards Association, the Alaska Federation of Natives, the National Indian Education Association and the National Congress of American Indians to encourage the President of the United States to direct the U.S. Department of Education to consult with Indian tribes and Native American governing bodies and traditional leaders and educators on evaluating the No Child Left Behind Act to determine and implement changes needed to bring it into compliance with the Native American Languages Act.

**Rationale.** "Think not forever of yourselves, nor of your own generation. Think of continuing generations of our families, think of our grandchildren and of those yet unborn, whose faces are coming from beneath the ground." Peacemaker, Founder of the Iroquois Confederacy, circa 1000 A.D.

As the American people embark on the journey to implement the "No Child Left Behind Act", the First Peoples of our nation are forced to face, yet again, another challenge to the survival of our languages and our cultures. As indigenous peoples, the struggle to maintain the vitality of our languages and our cultures against the powerful mainstream odds of assimilation becomes a critical issue. Our very identity, our cultures, our worldview, the expression of who we are as Native peoples hangs in the balance.

### HISTORY

According to a survey conducted in 1962 on the North American continent, there were 79 American Indian languages. Of those, most of the speakers were over 50. Fifty-one languages had fewer than 10 speakers. Thirty-five languages had between 10 and 100 speakers. Only six of them had at least 10,000 speakers. It is almost certain that at least 51 of these languages have all but disappeared (Nettle and Romaine).

In Alaska, Dr. Michael Krauss in 1980 predicted the future of Alaska Native languages in a paper entitled "Alaska Native Languages: Past, Present and Future." His deeply profound calculation that we would probably "see the death of the very last speakers of fifteen of the twenty languages" in the first half of the coming century was a wake up call that 22 years later we are finding so sadly, to be too close to being true. His prediction that Eyak probably would not survive this century came true. He predicted that Alaskan Tsimshian, Alaskan Haida, Holikachuk, and Tanana would probably be extinct by 2015 and Tlingit, Ahtna, Ingalik, Koyukok and Han by 2030. He said the languages with the best chance of survival were Central Alaskan Yupik and Siberian Yupik because of the large concentration of speakers of all generations. The impact that television and other media have had on the number of those speakers is serious cause for consternation.

Fortunately, the Native American Languages Act (NALA) was passed in 1990 (P.L. 101-477). This piece of federal legislation could very well be the saving grace of the indigenous languages that have continued to thrive. Specifically, NALA states, "It is the policy of the United States to - preserve, protect and

promote the rights and freedom of Native Americans to use, practice and develop Native American languages... encourage and support the use of Native American languages as a medium of instruction in order to encourage and support Native American language survival, equal education opportunity, increased student success and performance, increased student awareness and knowledge of their culture and history, and increased student and community pride; encourage State and local education programs to work closely with Native American parents, educators, Indian tribes and other Native American governing bodies in the implementation of programs to put this policy into effect."

NALA also has a provision for evaluating federal policies. In essence, this provision asks the President to direct Federal agencies to evaluate, in consultation with Indian tribes and other Native American governing bodies and traditional leaders and educators, their policies to determine and implement changes needed to bring them into compliance with the provisions of the Act.

## **RATIONALE**

The discrepancies, between the terms of the Native American Languages Act (NALA) and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) at the minimum, merit legal analysis and scrutiny. On the one hand, we have the mandate for supporting educational Native American language efforts. On the other, we have the mandate in the No Child Left Behind Act where the emphasis is on academics and English. This brings into the spotlight and into direct conflict, issues with inconsistencies in the Native American Languages Act via heritage language programs and fulfilling the mandate of the NCLB Act. The quandary with which we are faced, forces those people affected to question the intent of the NCLB insofar as its assimilative qualities and aspects and on the effects it is having on the already taxed and limited efforts that schools have undertaken to assist communities in ensuring the continued strength of Native languages.

Specific to the issue of Academic Assessments, the NCLB requires "high quality, yearly student academic assessments that include, at a minimum, academic assessments in mathematics, reading or language arts..." This condition puts Native American immersion language programs at enormous risk. The requirements stating that the assessments shall "be used for purposes for which such assessments are valid and reliable, and be consistent with relevant, nationally recognized professional and technical standards" could preclude the development of Native American language based academic assessments. History, very clearly, makes us question whether academic assessments developed by indigenous people for purposes of measuring academic proficiencies would be considered "consistent with relevant, nationally recognized professional and technical standards."

Notwithstanding the fact that very few, if any, indigenous academic assessments have been developed and are recognized, the amount of funding that comes with the Title III program has serious implications. Aside from the predisposition to set priority on "World Language" and English language assessment issues as a national priority, the minute financial resources allocated for program implementation further strains resources that, in most cases, are already overstretched due to numerous federal and state mandates and priorities, most of which, if not all, are unfunded. The Act requires each State plan to include the identification of "languages other than English that are present in the student population and indicate the languages for which yearly student academic assessments are not available and are needed." The limited fiscal situation makes it highly unlikely that the State(s) will "make every effort to develop such assessments."

This puts districts with language immersion programs and native language programs in jeopardy for several reasons. Children who are taught in a language other than English are at a distinct disadvantage because of the academic testing rigors requiring that assessments be done in English. How can they pass a test administered in English if they are taught in Inupiaq or Yupik? In addition, districts must show adequate yearly progress as a fundamental part of the accountability system built into the Act or be at risk of being sanctioned for not performing up to par. Understandably, Districts will not desire to have their schools negatively labeled and will take appropriate steps to ensure their schools are not stigmatized. These "appropriate" steps could very well mean compromising language programs resulting in the further decay of endangered languages, not to mention the social pathologies that accompany the concomitant loss of identity.

NCLB also requires a rigorous English language assessment. Beginning school year 2002-2003, each "local education agency" will "provide for an annual assessment of English proficiency (measuring students' oral language, reading, and writing skills in English)." 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. What is at issue in this regard is the colossal amount of energy that districts will need to exert on making certain their children can speak, read and write English sufficiently enough to pass both academic and English assessment programs. Contrast that amount of vigor with, inevitably, the infinitesimal amount of attention that will be given to language programs because of the need to comply with the new federal mandates. State and local educational agencies will need to be exceptionally innovative and utilize groundbreaking strategies to ensure that their languages are supported throughout the curriculum. *Adopted 2002 (Sunset: Nov. 2007)*

Recommendation: Continue

**(NEW) 5.8 ENCOURAGING SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO EMPHASIZE CIVICS EDUCATION** *in School Dist.*

AASB encourages member districts to develop well-articulated curriculum for civics education for students and provide effective professional development strategies for civics instructors. *ima*

**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. A citizens task force studying the issue of improving civics education in Alaska schools is scheduled to submit a report to the legislature in early 2008.

