

KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

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SCHOOL BOARD COMMUNICATION

Title: Legislative Priorities

Date: July 26, 2012

Item Number:

Worksession

Administrator: Steve Atwater, Ph.D. 
Superintendent of Schools

Attachments: 2011 (FY12) Legislative Priorities

Action Needed For Discussion Information Other: _____

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Each year the board sets legislative priorities for our state and federal legislatures. These priorities detail our areas of greatest need where we feel that the federal and state legislatures can offer KPBSD assistance. Last year we were criticized for not petitioning the Governor (through a committee) to have one or more of our priorities included in the Governor's budget. This worksession is your first opportunity to review last year's list of priorities and to consider what you would like included on this year's list. The administration is also seeking input on which items you feel should be brought forward as a request to the Governor for his budget. Such a request needs to happen by mid-August.

As we have done in the past, you will be asked to approve the FY13 list at your October meeting.

ADMINISTRATIVE RECOMMENDATION

N/A

KPBSD's Legislative Priorities

2012 State Legislative Priorities

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

Providing sustained, reliable and adequate educational funding for Alaska's students. Education funding with increases necessary to sustain current programs, adequate transportation systems, and promising new programs should not be a year-to-year problem. By providing forward funding, with annual increases to the Base Student Allocation (BSA), districts can better plan to meet its students' needs. KPBSD recommends that the legislature direct its education committees to advance a new three-year funding plan.

Funding early learning programs in Alaska. All children should have opportunities to learn during the formative early childhood years. Studies show that for every \$1 spent on early childhood education, \$8 is saved in later services that are not necessary. Many of Alaska's children are placed at risk for future school failure because they do not have access to rich early childhood learning opportunities. The District's use of federal Title money for preschool will continue, but will only serve a small percentage of Kenai Peninsula Borough preschool students. Given the current federal economic climate, it appears likely that the Title funds will be reduced in the coming years. As a way to offset this reduction and to expand our early learning opportunities, KPBSD recommends that the legislature issue a block grant for early childhood education. Further, the District advocates that enrollment in early childhood education is optional for students.

Repairing KPBSD Running Tracks. KPBSD recommends support for repairing its running tracks. The running tracks at Homer High School, Homer Middle School, Kenai Central High School, Ninilchik School, and Soldotna High School are in disrepair and need immediate attention. Without maintenance or reconstruction, the tracks will be deemed unusable. In addition, the tracks at Skyview High School and Seward High School are in poor condition and will soon be in the same state as the other listed schools. Because the capital improvement process places track repair with construction and not maintenance and hence, makes attaining the necessary priority status on the state list highly unlikely, KPBSD recommends that the legislature include funds in its capital budget for the repair of the District's running tracks. Priority for repairs will be given to Homer High School's track which was recently condemned and can no longer be used.

Extending the gas pipeline from Anchor Point to Homer. KPBSD recommends that the legislature allocate funds to extend the gas pipeline from Anchor Point to Homer. Using natural gas instead of oil to heat our Homer area schools will cause the district to realize significant savings.

Supporting the University of Alaska Anchorage's Kenai Peninsula College. As the economy of Alaska changes the general population is recognizing an increased need for post secondary training. For many residents on the Kenai Peninsula this training occurs at the Kenai Peninsula College's three campuses (Soldotna, Homer and Seward). Many of our high school students attend KPC classes on one of these campuses. KPBSD recommends that the legislature support the University of Alaska Anchorage's budget that includes funds that will allow KPC to expand its offerings and ability to serve its growing enrollment.

Creating a favorable climate for oil and gas exploration in Cook Inlet. 30% of the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District's budget comes from local taxes. Despite the increasing cost of education, the level of local contribution to the school district is flat. By providing incentives for responsible oil and gas exploration and development, the Kenai Peninsula Borough's tax base would likely be increased and in turn, offer the borough more revenue with which to support KPBSD.

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

Security Cameras to Prevent Vandalism. KPBSD requests support to purchase security cameras. The on-going cost of repairing vandalism damages is significant. Despite our best efforts and those of local police forces, many of KPBSD schools are regularly vandalized. The installation of security cameras would act as a deterrent to this crime and would likely lead to the arrest of those who take part in it.

Raising the mandatory age of attendance. The KPBSD recommends raising the required age of school attendance to 18. The District feels that the increased age of mandatory attendance will serve to lower the district's dropout rate and more importantly, let students know that the final two years of high school are critical to a their future well being.

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

Create New High School Exit Exam. The HSGQE and the Work Keys exam respectively serve to measure student readiness for graduation and preparedness for the world of work. KPBSD contends that one exam should serve both purposes. Such an exam could blend both the current HSGQE and the required WorkKeys test.

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2012 Federal Legislative Priorities

Maintaining Funding for the Entitlement Programs. The current federal economic climate is causing a reduction in federal funds for education. The Elementary Secondary Education Act was designed to help students living in poverty. Over the years, our neediest students have benefitted from these extra funds. While KPBSD understands the need to reduce federal spending, the District feels that reduction of support for ESEA should be a last resort.

Reauthorize Elementary Secondary Education Act. The current scramble by states to seek waivers to the No Child Left Behind Act requirements is an inappropriate way to respond to the unattainable facets of this Act. KPBSD calls on the federal legislature to reauthorize the ESEA with accountability provisions that are based on school growth. Further, KPBSD requests that the reauthorization allow states to make amendments to the Act as a way to respond to those provisions that are not suitable for Alaska.

Fully fund the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA was reauthorized in 2004. Under IDEA, Congress originally promised to fund up to 40% of the excess costs of educating students with disabilities. Currently congress has authorized expenditures to cover approximately 17% of the excess costs nationally. The Kenai Peninsula Borough School District believes that congress should fund the full amount they originally promised. To do otherwise requires local districts to reduce funding for general instructional needs to meet the needs of special student populations.

Funding early learning programs in Alaska. All children should have opportunities to learn during the formative early childhood years. Studies show that for every \$1 spent on early childhood education, \$8 is saved in later services that are not necessary. Many of Alaska's children are placed at risk for future school failure because they do not have access to rich learning opportunities. The District's use of federal Title money for preschool will continue, but will only serve a small percentage of Kenai Peninsula Borough preschool students.

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