



Anchorage School District

2005 Legislative Priorities

*First Session
24th Alaska State Legislature*

FUNDING

Alaska schools are being financially squeezed by under-funded mandates, increased costs and funding that is failing to keep pace. Our success as a school district and as a state in complying with Alaska's performance standards and the federal requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) requires our state policy makers to appropriate funding sufficient to meet the educational needs of our students.

The Anchorage School Board requests that our state policy makers appropriate funding for public education to meet the needs of Alaska's youth. To achieve this goal, the Board requests increased funding in three critical areas:

1. Accountability/Student Achievement

While signing the FY 04 operating budget into law, Gov. Murkowski challenged the education community to provide full accountability in exchange for full funding.

Accountability has been provided. Test scores districtwide and for each school are posted on the District's Web site and are available at schools and libraries throughout Anchorage. Each school's goals and plans for improvement are also available. The District's budget is continuously open to public scrutiny, including intensive review in 2003 by nearly 150 citizens involved in a budget review process, and a series of special town meetings in 2004. The budget is also available at schools and libraries throughout Anchorage. No other level of government is this transparent.

The Anchorage School Board, its administration, and staff have accepted responsibility for raising student achievement for all students, and for the efficient and effective use of resources to fulfill our mission to educate all students for success in life.

Appropriating an adequate amount of funding for education is the responsibility of state policymakers.

With today's student achievement challenges and federal mandates, increasing achievement goals and escalating costs continue to outpace state funding even with the significant effort to catch up in 2004. The result is that for next year "full funding" of the education funding formula remains insufficient. Meeting the needs of the Alaska Performance Standards and NCLB requires an investment in people, process, and accountability measures. The Anchorage School Board is committed to doing its part to ensure success and calls upon the legislature to increase education funding to meet these needs. It cannot be done without support from the state.

2. Debt Reimbursement

Safe, efficient, and technologically appropriate infrastructure is an essential ingredient in achieving academic success. This has largely been accomplished through the successful partnership between the Legislature and local taxpayers. The Anchorage School Board requests the Legislature and the Governor's Office to continue this partnership by fully honoring all past commitments for bonded indebtedness reimbursement.

To meet future school construction needs, the Anchorage School Board requests the Legislature and the Governor's Office reinstate and extend the school debt reimbursement program for new local bond propositions and continue to fully fund that program.

3. Employer Contribution Increases to the Teachers Retirement System (TRS) and the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS)

Academic achievement also depends on highly qualified and committed employees. The State mandated employer contribution increase to TRS and PERS for the Anchorage School District next year is approximately \$12 million. The Anchorage School Board requests the Legislature and Governor's Office fully fund this increase to ensure that we are not forced to use instructional funding to pay for this obligation.

GOVERNANCE

Increase liability for destruction of property by minors

Vandalism damages a school district's physical plant, has a negative impact on student learning, and demoralizes hard-working staff and students. Every dollar spent on repairing vandalism is a taxpayer dollar a school district cannot invest in textbooks, teachers or technology.

In 2003, the Alaska Legislature took the first step by increasing the amount school districts can recover from either parent, both parents, or the legal guardian of an un-emancipated minor under the age of 18 years, who, as a result of a knowing or intentional act, destroys real or personal property belonging to a school district from \$10,000 to \$15,000 for a parent without an insurance policy to \$25,000 for a parent with an insurance policy.

The Anchorage School Board urges the Alaska Legislature to allow a school district to recover, with appropriate judicial protections, the full amount of damages to school property from an un-emancipated minor and from either parent, both parents, or the legal guardian of the minor who, as a result of a knowing or intentional act, destroys real or personal property belonging to a school district. We believe that school districts will reasonably evaluate when to seek full recovery, and that the courts will remain able to weigh circumstances in which full recovery is inappropriate due to family or financial circumstances, but that an artificial ceiling is unfair to the taxpaying public.

PERSONNEL

Assault of school employees

State statute provides for specific terms of imprisonment for crimes committed against certain public employees, such as peace officers, firefighters, etc., in the performance of their official duties. Our school employees, who work each day with our most precious resource, our children, deserve the same level of respect and protection under the law. In addition, assault on a school employee during performance of official duties may place students at risk, and any assault because of official duties can have a significant indirect impact on students and school communities.

The Anchorage School Board urges the Alaska Legislature to revise Alaska criminal code or sentencing guidelines so that a non-student adult convicted of an assault on a school employee during or because of the performance of official duties will receive a mandatory minimum term of imprisonment similar to that imposed upon an adult who assaults a uniformed or otherwise clearly identified peace officer, fire fighter, correctional employee, emergency medical technician, paramedic, ambulance attendance or other emergency responder engaged in the performance of official duties at the time of the offense.