

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

ASD MEMORANDUM #69 (2000-2001)

October 9, 2000

TO: SCHOOL BOARD  
FROM: OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT  
SUBJECT: 2001 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

RECOMMENDATION:

It is the Administration's recommendation that the School Board approve the 2001 Anchorage School District Legislative Priorities (Attachment A).

PERTINENT FACTS:

The goal of the School Board is to work with local, state, and federal governments in obtaining the necessary resources, laws, and regulations for the District to provide the educational programs and support services necessary to fulfill its educational mission.

The Anchorage School District legislative priorities reflect the legislative issues and concerns of School Board members. Upon approval of the priorities by the School Board, the Legislative subcommittee of the School Board will work with the Administration to develop additional rationale and supportive materials for each of the priorities.

The School Board may wish to add or modify the priority list during discussion of the overall package at the Board meeting.

CC/LAW

Attachment

Prepared by: Lawrence Wiget  
Executive Director, Public Affairs

Approved by: Carol Comeau, Superintendent (Acting)



(Attachment A)

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
**LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES**  
**2001**

---

## **Governance**

- **High School Qualifying Exam Effective Date Change**

The Anchorage School Board supports changing the effective date of the High School Qualifying Exam from January 1, 2002 to February 1, 2002.

**Rationale:** In 1997, the Legislature passed a law requiring high school students in the Class of 2002 and beyond to pass an examination known as the High School Qualifying Exam before they can be awarded a diploma.

However, many students who do not graduate with their class in June of 2001, for whatever reason, will not have the opportunity to finish their coursework during the fall semester before the effective date of the High School Qualifying Exam goes into place. The fall semester for most districts will end during January 2002. The effective date of the law is January 1, 2002.

As a result these students will have to pass the High School Qualifying Exam in order to qualify for a high school diploma in Alaska. However, they will not have had the benefit of being taught to the new standards upon which the test is built, nor opportunities to obtain remedial assistance as those who are scheduled to graduate in the spring of 2001.

## **Funding**

- **Inflation Proof the School Funding Formula**

The Anchorage School Board requests that the Legislature meet the essential funding needs of public schools in Alaska and include an automatic, annual adjustment for inflation.

**Rationale:** In 1998 the Alaska Legislature rewrote the education funding formula without an automatic adjustment for inflation. As a result, increased costs are eroding the purchasing power of districts, resulting in reductions to essential programs and services.

The Anchorage School Board does not endorse the use of the phrase “fully funded” to describe the current legislative practice of approving funding with no adjustment for the increased cost of doing business

- **Fully Fund Pupil Transportation**

The Anchorage School Board believes the state of Alaska should fully reimburse the cost of pupil transportation. Getting students safely to and from school is a vital part of public education.

**Rationale:** Unique climatic conditions here in Alaska make it difficult for children to safely walk to and from school most of the year. As a result, It should continue to be fully funded by the state. We further recommend that the Legislature direct the Department of Education and Early Development appoint a task force made up of district transportation representatives and business officials to review regulations and establish "Allowable Costs" for pupil transportation. Local districts would be required to pay 100% of the cost of any service above those allowed under the revised regulations.

- **Support for Capital Construction/Major Maintenance**

The Anchorage School Board supports legislation that provides continuing and adequate capital funding for public school facilities.

**Rationale:** A source of funding separate from the School Funding formula should be made available for capital improvement projects each year to prevent a backlog of facility needs in the Anchorage School District and throughout Alaska. In 1998, and again in 2000, the Legislature reinstated a debt reimbursement program which increased capital funding for schools, and for which the School Board is very grateful. However, the State Capital budget and the current debt reimbursement program are still inadequate to fully meet current and future District needs.

- **Funding of Charter Schools**

The Anchorage School Board supports legislation to: fund creation and start-up costs of all charter schools; fund facility space for charter schools; and, fund a charter school with less than 200 students as a separate school within the School Funding formula. This money should be in addition to regular foundation dollars.

**Rationale:** SB 88, Formation of Charter Schools, became law at the end of the 1995 legislative session. The law gave local school boards the ability to approve or deny charter school applications. Funding for the day-to-day operation of the charter schools was

provided through the School Funding formula. However, no funding was provided for necessary planning and start-up costs associated with the opening of any new school.

Also, many of our schools are over capacity and do not have space to house a charter school and many charter schools prefer to be housed in their own, separate facility because of the nature of their programs. Without adequate planning and start-up funding, many districts will have to deny a charter school application because of a lack of resources or fund charters out of already reduced budgets for neighborhood schools.

Finally, for funding purposes, the original Charter School law counts a charter school with less than 200 students as part of the school with the highest average daily membership within the district. Failing to count a charter school as a separate school will cause many charter schools with less than 200 students to fail as a result of inadequate funding.

The legislature must step-up to funding the planning and start-up costs associated with charter schools.

- **Funding of Gifted Program**

The Anchorage School Board believes that the gifted program should remain a part of special education law. If this is not possible due to changes in Federal law, then an adequate level of state funding must be available to districts to maintain the gifted program.

**Rationale:** Currently, the gifted program falls under special education law in Alaska. As such, it is funded as part of the Special Needs Factor under the current school funding program.

The state needs to provide essential funding beyond the combined special needs category under which gifted is currently funded to insure that the educational needs of the gifted students are being met within the state.

- **Annual Funding of Learning Opportunity Grants**

The Anchorage School Board supports annual funding of the Learning Opportunity Grants established by the Legislature this past session.

**Rationale:** In 2000, the Legislature established Learning Opportunity Grants, approximately \$46 per student, to assist districts in preparing students for meeting the recently established State Standards and in preparing them to pass the High School Qualifying Exam which goes into effect with the graduating class of 2001.

Annual and increased funding in this area is needed for school districts to adequately prepare students for meeting these new standards and in passing the high-stakes High School Qualifying Exam.

## **Personnel**

- **Provide Flexibility in Hiring of a Superintendent**

The Anchorage School Board supports changing state law to allow the hiring of a superintendent without a Type B superintendent certificate.

**Rationale:** The only way currently a school district can hire a chief administrative officer without a Type B certificate is if that person has no hiring or supervisory authority over any staff person required to be certified, including an Assistant Superintendent for Instruction. In doing so, the school district would have to have two Superintendents/CEOs with equal authority; the non-certificated one would have final authority over non-instructional departments.

- **Remedy Special Education and Related Services Personnel Shortage**

The Anchorage School Board supports legislation enabling districts to address the shortage of certificated special education and related personnel statewide.

**Rationale:** The Anchorage School District, as well as other 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.

The Anchorage School Board supports Alaskan residents completing certification as a special education or related service provider while attending an academic program outside the State of Alaska and who, upon certification, are committed to provide services to Alaska public school systems.

The Anchorage School Board also promotes the establishment and expansion of post-secondary educational programs to train additional individuals as certified special education teachers and the initiation of programs to train related service providers (i.e. school psychologists, physical therapists, and speech therapists) within our State University system.

