



# KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

## Board of Education

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## 2020 State Legislative Priorities

The Kenai Peninsula Borough School District stands ready to work with the Alaska legislature to find the right solutions to fully implement the following priorities in order to support development of world-class graduates from our public schools.

- **Public Education**

Section I of Article VII Health, Education, and Welfare of the Alaska State Constitution is clear: “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.” The Kenai Peninsula Borough School District (KPBSD) fully supports what our State’s founders promised all generations of Alaskans. An equitable and suitable public school system provides opportunities for the preparation of all Alaskan children for effective citizenship in our state and nation; as such, it is critical that public funds go to support public schools.

- **Timely, sustainable, adequate education funding plan that addresses inflation**

The State of Alaska must provide timely, sustainable, adequate revenue for public schools in Alaska. This funding must be consistent, reliable and predictable to provide full funding to meet increasing costs and the diverse and significant needs of our students. Early notification of funding is critical for sound financial management, as well as recruitment and retention of quality educators. The Kenai Peninsula Borough School District (KPBSD) is accountable for the dollars entrusted to it and supports measures that will allow our district to operate in a more efficient manner.

- **Safe Schools, Positive School Climate, and Social and Emotional Learning & Well-being**

Providing a safe school environment conducive to learning is a high priority. Schools have experienced many safety challenges and tragedies in recent years around the country. The State of Alaska must provide the funding to retrofit facilities to provide more secure schools. This will take a significant capital improvements budget.

School safety is not only related to the physical plant, it is also strongly related to the school’s climate and culture. The state must provide financial support so schools can partner with local communities to implement comprehensive, culturally appropriate school-based mental health programs that support and foster the health and development of students. Additional funding is necessary to enable schools to increase, recruit and retain more school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, and mental health specialists. Funding is also needed to increase professional development opportunities for districts in planning and implementing interventions for students experiencing childhood trauma and other mental health challenges. Meeting the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) needs of students is essential.

- **Health Care Costs**

It is critical that the State of Alaska develop a long-term, sustainable plan that addresses the rising health care costs negatively impacting all sectors of Alaska. The cost of health care for KPBSD continues to increase every year between 6% and 12% per covered employee. KPBSD has worked hard to find efficiencies to lower these costs; yet, the district has not been able to eliminate the increases. More funds expended for health care, reduces the amount of funding available to the classroom.

***The mission of the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District is to empower all learners to positively shape their futures.***

**KPBSD Board Members and Superintendent**

Penny Vadla, President	Lynn Hohl
Zen Kelly, Vice President	Greg Madden
Dan Castimore, Clerk	Matt Morse
Mike Illg, Treasurer	Jason Tauriainen
Debbie Cary	Cameron Blackwell, Student Representative
	John O'Brien, Superintendent

## **2020 Federal Legislative Priorities**

The Kenai Peninsula Borough School District (KPBSD) stands ready to work with the federal legislature to find the right solutions to fully implement the following priorities in order to support development of world-class graduates from our public schools.

- **Public Education Priority**

The KPBSD believes that public education is an indispensable component for strengthening the ideals of our nation's democracy and a necessary, unifying, and dynamic influence in American life. The public school insures the preparation of all children for effective citizenship in the United States. As such, it is critical that public funds go to support public schools. The State of Alaska and KPBSD are very supportive of school choice, as evidenced by providing accountable public: charter, alternative and home school programs. Similar to what is in the Alaska Constitution; we oppose any legislation that expends public funds through voucher programs, or indirectly through tax credits or related plans, to fund any religious or other private educational institution. Our district has always been accountable for all public funds received. In order for all children to be provided a fair opportunity to succeed, any educational entity receiving public funds should be held accountable in the same manner as KPBSD.

- **Safe Schools**

Providing a safe school environment conducive to learning is crucial. Schools have experienced many safety challenges and tragedies in recent years around the country. Federal support will be necessary to fund facility upgrades and additional staff to address security, school climate improvements and student supports to meet the ever-growing issues faced by today's youth in our country.

Additional funding is necessary to enable schools to increase, recruit and retain more school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, and mental health specialists. Funding is also needed to increase professional development opportunities for districts in planning and implementing interventions for students experiencing childhood trauma and other mental health challenges.

- **Funding of IDEA, Federal Title Programs and Accountability**

The Individual's with Disabilities Education Act sought to level the playing field for all of our students. The Federal government was able to establish this program with a promise to provide States with at least 40% of the costs associated with serving our students with disabilities. Currently, the Federal contribution is under 20% of costs with little to no discussion on keeping the original funding promise. KPBSD requests that the promised funding level to implement this Act is provided to states and districts as soon as possible so that all students receive the highest quality education possible in all of our schools.

With the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) implementation underway, the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District urges the United States Department of Education (USED) to honor local control and avoid federal overreach while implementing ESSA. KPBSD also requests that federal legislators eliminate discretionary funding caps, to allow adequate investment in education, including full funding of the education programs authorized by the bipartisan Every School Succeeds Act. We also ask that the USED honor the intent of the law and not attempt to create regulations that "fix" problems not addressed in legislation such as the "supplement, not supplant restrictions" and the insistence by USED to require that a school's performance be defined by a single designation.

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