



KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

Board of Education

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2021 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 to address COVID-19**

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. October student enrollment numbers are the biggest determiner of state revenue for districts. COVID-19 has caused major enrollment disruptions and fluctuations in districts across Alaska. Current Hold Harmless legislation provides relief to districts for 75% of enrollment losses in neighborhood brick and mortar schools, but it does not provide protection for migration to homeschool or loss of intensive needs students. The Kenai Peninsula Borough School District (KPBSD) is advocating for a legislative change that provides FY21 Hold Harmless funding at 100% for the entire Foundation Formula based on FY20 OASIS enrollment counts. This will allow districts to honor employment contracts and commitments made for FY21.

- **Hold Harmless Funding for FY21**

School districts in Alaska are not given the power to raise funding through taxes or other sources of revenue. KPBSD is 100% dependent on the State of Alaska and the Kenai Peninsula Borough (KPB) to fund KPBSD through each of their respective revenue raising powers. COVID-19 has severely restricted both Alaska’s and KPB’s ability to raise revenues to support school districts. Unfortunately, revenue replacement is not a permissible use of CARES Act funding which has restricted both the State of Alaska and KPB’s ability to fund KPBSD through available CARES Act funding. KPBSD encourages revenue replacement as an allowable use in any future CARES Act type of funding.

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

Social and emotional learning (SEL) & wellbeing is the key to providing a safe school environment conducive to learning must be a high priority. With the high rates of domestic violence, childhood trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACES) in Alaska, and in light of the collective trauma our students, families, staff, and communities have experienced due to the COVID19 Global Pandemic, school efforts towards meeting social emotional needs is more critical than ever. 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 needs of students is essential to the long term well-being of our students and ultimately of our communities.

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

Patti Truesdell

Zen Kelly, Vice President

Greg Madden

Jason Tauriainen, Clerk

Matt Morse

Mike Illg, Treasurer

Virginia Morgan

Debbie Cary

John O'Brien, Superintendent

2021 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.

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

Social and emotional learning (SEL) & wellbeing is the key to providing a safe school environment conducive to learning must be a high priority. With the high rates of domestic violence, childhood trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACES) in Alaska, and in light of the collective trauma our students, families, staff, and communities have experienced due to the COVID19 Global Pandemic, school efforts towards meeting social emotional needs is more critical than ever. 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.

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- **Funding for COVID-19 Pandemic Response. CARES PART II**

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

Since its inception in 1975, The Individual’s with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) has protected students with disabilities by ensuring access to a fee appropriate public education. The Federal government was able to establish this program with a promise to provide States with at least 40% of the of the National Average per Pupil Expenditure.

While Special education funding has received significant increases over the past 18 years, federal funding has leveled off recently and has even been cut. The closest the federal government has come to reaching its 40 percent commitment was 18 percent in 2005. The KPBSD requests that the promised funding level to implement IDEA 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 and that the approximately 6 million students with disabilities in our country are able to fully realize the promise of IDEA.

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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