



KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

Board of Education

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2019 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. The public school insures the preparation of all children for effective citizenship in our state; as such, it is critical that public funds go to support public schools.

- **Safe Schools**

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

- **Career and Technical Education**

Students who experience high quality career and technical education programs are more likely to graduate on time with career readiness skills. Alaska's economic growth and stability is also dependent on districts' abilities to provide relevant CTE programs for all students. The alignment of CTE programs to meet the needs of all labor markets through collaboration between the Department of Education and Early Development and the Department of Labor and Workforce Development is crucial to improve on-time graduation rates, increase career earnings, decrease dropout percentages and offer more dual credit opportunities.

- **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 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.

- **Health Care Costs**

The cost of health care for KPBSD increases every year between 6% and 12%. Our district has worked hard to find efficiencies to lower these costs; it has not been able to slow the overall increases. More funds for health care reduces the amount of funding devoted to the classroom. It is time for the State to develop a long-term, sustainable plan that addresses rising health care costs that are negatively impacting all sectors of Alaska.

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

KPBSD Board Members and Superintendent 2018-2019

Penny Vadla, President

Lynn Hohl

Zen Kelly, Vice President

Greg Madden

Dan Castimore, Clerk

Matt Morse

Mike Illg, Treasurer

Jason Tauriainen

Debbie Cary

Tanis Lorrington, Student Representative

Sean Dusek, Superintendent

2019 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. KPBSD has always been supportive of school choice, as evidenced by working closely with our charter schools. However, we oppose any legislation that diverts public funds from K-12 education directly through voucher programs, or indirectly through tax credits or related schemes to fund private, religious or home school education. 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 entity receiving any 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 any 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.

Adequate funding is necessary to enable schools to increase, recruit and retain more school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, and mental health specialists. Additionally, funding is 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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