

Prior Year PERS Retirement Billings (continued)

- The unintended consequences of AS39.35.255 are particularly challenging for school districts and municipalities, many of which are already experiencing population loss and declining revenues from various sources.
- Districts that have paid assessments should have the funds refunded, or otherwise forgiven.

ESEA Re-Authorization

The Alaska Council of School Administrators calls upon Congress to complete the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 2014 and in doing so restore state discretion on best approaches to bring about meaningful student achievement improvement. If Congress fails to act, all sanctions and other punitive measures should be suspended until a formal reauthorization occurs. ESEA reauthorization should include:

- Returning responsibility for improving student learning to the state and local level while supporting quality public schools for all children.
- Establishing state initiated accountability systems that emphasize capacity building and recognize the uniqueness of each school and district.
- Enabling a state developed academic growth model that provides realistic targets for individual schools, teachers and students based on multiple and varied indicators.

Secure Rural Schools & Community Self-Determination Act (Forest Receipts)

The Alaska Council of School Administrators endorses the continuation of the 100+ year partnership that was created between the Federal government and rural communities to compensate counties affected by the placement of timber into federal ownership. This partnership stipulates that 25% of the revenue derived from U.S. Forest Service activities, e.g., timber sales, mineral extraction and grazing fees, be returned to impacted counties. In 2000, Congress passed the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (SRSCA) to help ensure that the partnership was honored, legislation that expired on September 30, 2012 and re-enacted earlier this fall to extend SRSCA through the end of 2014 with a 5% reduction

- If SRSCA is not reauthorized, funding for the program will decrease from \$440 million to \$62.5 million. For Alaska, SRSCA funding will diminish significantly from \$15.6 million in FY13 to less than \$500,000 in FY14.
- SRSCA is critically important to 24 of Alaska's 54 school districts (44% of all districts), which have relied heavily on SRSCA funds to supplement local funding for education.



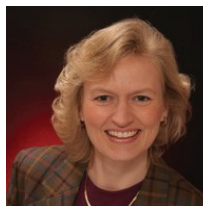
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Student photos courtesy of Valdez City Schools & Alaska Gateway School District-Mentasta Lake Katie John School

CORE PURPOSE

Professional education leaders' forum and
advocacy for public education



2014 JOINT POSITION STATEMENTS

The Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA) serves as an umbrella for four of Alaska's premier educational leadership organizations, including:

- Alaska Association of Elementary School Principals
- Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals
- Alaska Association of School Administrators
- Alaska Association of School Business Officials

Introduction: Serving All Alaska's Children

ACSA members are united in support of the 2014 joint position statements outlined in this document that were created to guide legislative advocacy in support of PreK-12 education and the children served. Eight advocacy priorities have been identified that ACSA members trust will receive serious consideration by other like-minded organizations, the Alaska State Legislature and United States Congress.

- Adequate Funding
- Early Childhood Education
- Career and Technical Education
- Preparing, Attracting and Retaining Qualified Educators
- Worker's Compensation Fee Schedule
- Prior Year PERS Retirement Billings
- ESEA Re-Authorization
- Secure Rural Schools & Community Self-Determination Act

ACSA members look forward to the spirited debates that undoubtedly will occur this spring as policy makers consider constructive solutions for advancing public education on behalf of Alaska's children. Our membership recognizes that Alaska is facing declining oil production and to that end will seriously consider beneficial cost containment initiatives, recognizing that Alaska's future requires constraint as state budgets are enacted. From ACSA's perspective, building Alaska's future by ensuring a quality education for each Alaskan child and family is a priority that cannot be discounted.

Adequate Funding

The Alaska Council of School Administrators strongly encourages the Legislature to ensure adequate operations and infrastructure funding for school districts. Without adequate funding, school districts cannot efficiently deliver the quality education services required by Alaska's students, citizens and the State Constitution.

- Adopting a multi-year foundation funding plan early in the session allows for effective long-range planning and promotes operational efficiency. Increases in funding are needed to deal with persistent inflationary pressures in energy costs, payroll, benefits and transportation.
- Cost drivers such as health insurance, worker's compensation and energy should be reviewed on a state-wide basis, to consider opportunities to promote cost effective use of funds.
- Funding of capital projects through the capital improvement projects program, the bond debt reimbursement program, the rural school construction fund and the general obligation bond program helps provide safe and high quality learning environments statewide.
- Supporting Internet infrastructure improvements to increase speed and limit data delay helps facilitate a reliable and equitable means of delivering educational opportunities for students throughout Alaska.
- Full funding of any new initiatives that require districts to provide additional services should be provided.
- Reducing the hold-harmless funding formula trigger from five percent (5%) of Average Daily Membership (ADM) to two and one-half percent (2.5%) will help mitigate the negative educational impact of a sudden drop in student enrollment.
- Developing a long-term, comprehensive approach to increasing available state education funding will help ensure a quality education for all students and support the ongoing economic vitality of our state.

Early Childhood Education

The Alaska Council of School Administrators believes early childhood education should be a priority for all Alaskans who desire to increase and improve educational opportunities for all children, and it supports the funding of programs that will offer early education opportunities.

- Research is clear and consistent that the benefits of early childhood education are significant and important to the educational development of young people.
- A reliable system of funding for early childhood education programs is not available for all of Alaska's schools and families.

Early Childhood Education (*continued*)

- The children most impacted by the lack of funding for early childhood education are those without access to alternate educational programs.

Career and Technical Education

The Alaska Council of School Administrators supports adequate and equitable funding for Career and Technical Education (CTE) in order to ensure K-12 students have access to the tools, training, and programs to prepare a future workforce for Alaska. Educational leaders need to be involved in the process of identifying existing rural and urban programs for improving and expanding workforce development opportunities for our children. CTE is critical to ensure that all Alaska students are competitive in the global economy.

- We are appreciative of the additional funding in FY12 and FY13; however, continued investment is necessary to fully implement the statewide plan for CTE, coordinated by the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development.
- Reengaging disenfranchised students in all grades through expanded CTE programs, including career and technical student organizations, and exposure to career pathways, will assist educators in increasing graduation rates and reducing the dropout rate for Alaska's children.
- A strong, well-articulated CTE model in both rural and urban school districts is integral to supporting high K-12 educational standards and Alaska's economic growth and stability.
- CTE professional development is critical to ensure teachers can provide for the variety of students' interests and the full range of industry demands which require content mastery as well as industry-based credentials and ongoing training.



Preparing, Attracting and Retaining Qualified Educators

The Alaska Council of School Administrators encourages the development of a comprehensive statewide program to prepare, attract and retain quality educators in our schools.

- The Alaska university system does not graduate enough students in teacher education, administration, and related services areas to meet school districts' staffing needs.

Preparing, Attracting and Retaining Qualified Educators (*continued*)

- Living conditions in remote areas and the higher cost of living in many Alaskan communities present challenges for teachers and administrators, making it difficult to attract and retain qualified teachers and administrators.
- Compensation packages in many states exceed Alaska's salaries and benefits for teachers and administrators, especially when factoring in Alaska's higher cost of living.

Worker's Compensation Fee Schedule

The Alaska Council of School Administrators asks that the Legislature take action to return to the historical method of setting a fixed fee schedule for allowable medical fees in workers compensation claims. This should be revisited annually to determine an appropriate fee schedule. Implementation of HB 13 in 2011 (codified in AS23.30.097(a) (1)), which tied payments to "usual, customary, and reasonable fees" (UCR), has already resulted in rate increases averaging 10% for each of the last two fiscal years.

- Alaskan employers currently pay the highest rates in the country for workers compensation coverage, straining resources.
- Payments for medical expenses now make up 76% of the amount paid for workers compensation claims in the state.
- Medical costs have increased significantly in recent years for the same service due to implementation of this bill, according to the Alaska Public Entity Insurance, Alaska Municipal League Joint Insurance Association and the Alaska Division of Risk Management.
- Research by the National Council on Compensation Insurance shows that states without workers compensation fixed or indexed fee schedules have higher medical costs.

Prior Year PERS Retirement Billings

The Alaska Council of School Administrators recommends that the legislature take action to revise the provision in AS39.35.255 which requires an FY08 funding baseline for all future PERS retirement payments.

- The calculation mandated in AS39.35.255 references a single base year, FY08 that unfairly penalizes employers with unusually high FY08 PERS payroll for one-time special projects such as construction.
- In the long-term, the FY08 baseline will discourage employers from adopting the most efficient staffing plans, which may include part-time staffing and other efficiency measures such as out-sourcing.