



KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

Office of Superintendent

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M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: October 12, 2010
TO: School Board Members
FROM: Steve Atwater, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools
RE: 2011 Legislative Priorities

Background: Each year you send our state and federal legislators a list of legislative priorities that will benefit the district. The proposed 2011 lists for both state and federal priorities are at the end of this memo. In addition to including many of those that were on last year's list, I added three items: request for support to extend the gas pipeline from Anchor Point to Homer, request for funds to purchase security cameras to help prevent vandalism and request for funds to repair KPBSD's running tracks.

Recommendation: Approve priorities as presented

Proposed 2011 State Legislative Priorities

The Kenai Peninsula Borough School District calls on the Alaska State Legislature to recognize that children are the first priority, by:

Extending the gas pipeline from Anchor Point to Homer. KPBSD recommends that the legislature allocate funds to extend the gas pipeline from Anchor Point to Homer. Using natural gas instead of oil to heat our Homer area schools will cause the district to realize significant savings.

Security Cameras to Prevent Vandalism. KPBSD requests support to purchase security cameras. The on-going cost of repairing vandalism damages is significant. Despite our best efforts and those of local police forces, many of KPBSD schools are regularly vandalized. The installation of security cameras would act as a deterrent to this crime and would likely lead to the arrest of those who take part in it.

Repairing KPBSD Running Tracks. KPBSD recommends support for repairing its running tracks. The running tracks at Homer High School, Homer Middle School, Kenai Central High School, and Soldotna High School are in disrepair and need immediate attention. Due to their deteriorating condition, the district is limited in where it can host competitive track meets. In addition, the tracks at Skyview High School and Seward High School are in poor condition and will soon be in the same state as the other listed schools.

Fully implementing ISER Area Cost Differential. KPBSD recommends the immediate implementation of the findings of the ISER area cost differential (ACD) study. Further, the district recommends that the ISER ACD be maintained for future education funding.

Providing sustained, reliable and adequate educational funding for Alaska's students. Education funding with increases necessary to sustain current programs and promising new programs should not be a year-to-year problem. By providing forward funding, with annual increases to the Base Student Allocation (BSA) each year, districts can better plan for meeting their student needs. KPBSD recommends that the legislature direct its education committees to advance a new three-year funding plan.

Raising the mandatory age of attendance. The KPBSD recommends raising the required age of attendance to 18. The District feels that the increased age of mandatory attendance will serve to lower the dropout rate and more importantly, let students know that the final two years of high school are critical to a their future well being.

Addressing huge energy costs to school districts through increased or supplemental funding. Individuals, communities and schools are facing higher fuel prices. Increases in energy costs directly impact available revenue for school programs. Conservation programs and maintenance efforts have been put in place to help with these costs but will not address the huge increases. Relief for high energy costs needs to be provided to school districts.

Funding early learning programs in Alaska. All children should have opportunities to learn during the formative early childhood years. Studies show that for every \$1 spent in early childhood education, \$8 is saved in later services that are not necessary. Many of Alaska's children are placed at risk for future school failure because they do not have access to rich learning opportunities. The District's use of federal Title money for preschool will continue, but will only serve a small percentage of Kenai Peninsula Borough preschool students.

Providing support for additional workforce development courses and career and technical needs. The implementation of vocational programs inevitably results in additional expenses that are beyond the standard revenue available to a school district. An educated and skilled workforce is a key to economic vitality. Further, the District is confident that a vibrant vocational program will help to reduce the number of dropouts. Funding for career and technical education and training, especially at the middle and high school levels, would begin to address the anticipated gap in workers for Alaska jobs.

Addressing health care costs in Alaska. In Alaska, approximately 122,000 residents have no medical insurance and the price of treatment is increasing. The uninsured drive costs up for everyone. The health care costs for the District are approximately 10% of the budget; all indications are that this is a growing cost of doing business. The District recommends that the legislature create a statewide insurance plan in which public entities may participate.

Providing accountability for all school-age children of the state. Having a choice of an educational delivery system is important to Alaskans. However, all children have a right to be safe and receive an education. A registration and educational accountability system for school age children will help protect the rights of those least able to care for themselves.

Create New High School Exit Exam. The HSGQE and the Work Keys exam respectively serve to measure student readiness for graduation and preparedness for the world of work. KPBSD contends that one exam should serve both purposes. Such an exam could blend both the current HSGQE and soon to be required WorkKeys test.

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Proposed 2011 Federal Legislative Priorities

Extending the gas pipeline from Anchor Point to Homer. KPBSD recommends that the legislature allocate funds to extend the gas pipeline from Anchor Point to Homer. Using natural gas instead of oil to heat our Homer area schools will cause the district to realize significant savings in the cost of heating these schools.

Address health care costs in the United States In Alaska 18.2% of its residents, which is nearly 122,000 people, have no medical insurance and the price of treatment is increasing. In the U.S., over 47 million people have no health insurance. The uninsured drive health care costs up for everyone. For school districts in Alaska, these health care costs for current and retired employees are a growing problem. In many districts, including the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District, these costs add up to more than 10% of the budget. This growing budget category mitigates districts' ability to directly impact student achievement through classroom focused expenditures.

Fully fund Federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) mandates. In order to ensure a quality education for all Alaskan students and meet the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act federal funding must be sustainable, reliable, and adequate. NCLB requirements for assessment, targeted student services, teacher and paraprofessional qualifications and services for children in transition require funding support far above current funding levels. Restrictions on transferability of funds for districts in improvement hinder the ability of these districts to effectively address identified needs therefore need to be relaxed. Less restrictive transferability regulations would allow for increased learning opportunities for struggling learners in high poverty areas and low performing student groups.

Fully fund the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA was reauthorized in 2004. Under IDEA, Congress originally promised to fund up to 40% of the excess costs of educating students with disabilities. Currently congress has authorized expenditures to cover approximately 17% of the excess costs nationally. The Kenai Peninsula Borough School District believes that congress should fund the full amount they originally promised. To do otherwise requires local districts to reduce funding for general instructional needs to meet the needs of special student populations. This results in another under-funded mandate passed down to state and local governments.

Funding early learning programs in Alaska. All children should have opportunities to learn during the formative early childhood years. Studies show that for every \$1 spent in early childhood education, \$8 is saved in later services that are not necessary. Many of Alaska's children are placed at risk for future school failure because they do not have access to rich learning opportunities. The District's use of federal Title money for preschool will continue, but will only serve a small percentage of Kenai Peninsula Borough preschool students.