



*Valdez City Schools*  
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## **2020 State Legislative Priorities**

Valdez City Schools 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.

### **TRS/PERS**

Beginning in 2016, legislators have attempted to raise the maximum employer contribution rates for PERS and TRS, in an attempt to shift costs from the state to local governments. Similar legislation introduced with substantial shifting of costs onto local governments would be devastating. The PERS/TRS system is the legal and moral responsibility of the State, as it is THEIR program. School districts simply pay an amount set by the State in order to be participants in the plan. We do not provide retirement benefits; we do not have a say in any of the fiduciary decisions.

### **Predictable Funding**

School districts need reassurance of timely, reliable, and predictable revenue for schools; funding the true cost of education in all districts and providing full funding for all initiatives, laws, and mandates that require additional services. Early notification of funding is crucial to sound financial management, as well as recruitment and retention of quality educators.

### **Early Childhood Funding**

Equitable access to fully funded, sustainable preschool programs provides a foundation of excellent social, emotional and cognitive instruction to students. Research clearly demonstrates that early intervention and instruction is one of the best ways to increase student achievement across all demographics and create the greatest opportunity for all students to read proficiently by 3rd grade. Early childhood education should be considered as part of the school funding through the BSA.

## **2020 Federal Legislative Priorities**

Valdez City Schools 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.

### **Forest Receipts (Safe and Secure Rural Schools Act)**

Support is needed for the Forest Management for Rural Stability Act making the Secure Rural Schools program—which expired at the end of FY 2018—permanent by creating an endowment fund to provide stable, increasing and reliable funding for county services. Without a revitalized revenue stream to fund Safe and Secure Rural Schools, Alaska will lose \$11.2 million dollars in revenue, mostly tied to education.

### **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. VCS 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 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) implementation underway, Valdez City Schools (VCS) urges the United States Department of Education (USED) to honor local control and avoid federal overreach while implementing ESSA. VCS 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.