

School Laws and Finance

What are the laws governing what a School Board can and can't do?

Local school districts were created by the Legislature to formulate policies for the operation of school districts in order to implement the requirements of the constitution and state laws. AASB worked with LexisNexis to provide annually an edition of School Laws and Regulations Annotated. This 500 page book includes everything of interest to those who govern, administer and teach in the public schools. These include laws providing for the creation of School Boards, Compulsory Education and Child Protection, as well as the Administrative Procedure Act that includes what is commonly referred to as the Open Meetings Law.

Many laws authorize the State Board of Education to prescribe rules affecting local school operations. These are included in the Alaska Administrative Code and commonly referred to as regulations.

How is my school district attorney appointed?

The Board appoints a legal counsel to provide legal advice to the Board and Superintendent or designee. The school district attorney works for the entire Board. Procedures should be clear as to who has authority to contact the attorney from the district and within the Board.

How are public schools funded?

Unlike many other states, the majority of funding for schools in Alaska comes from the state. Nearly one-third of the state's total operating budget goes to support public education and is distributed through a funding formula adopted by the Legislature. Federal funds for impact aid and special title programs also account for a large share of school funding.

The 19 Rural Education Attendance Areas (REAs) receive 100% of their basic school funding from the state, since communities in the Unorganized Borough essentially have neither a tax base nor a means for collecting taxes. School districts in incorporated areas are required to contribute to their schools, either through local taxes or in-kind contributions. They also have the ability to raise funds beyond "basic need," within established limits.

Alaska's public schools are funded with a combination of state aid, a required local contribution – where applicable -- and federal impact assistance. AS 14.17 establishes state aid on the average daily membership (ADM). ADM is determined each October. ADM is then applied to the Base Student Allocation (currently \$5,380) in the state's foundation funding formula. The formula then adjusts each district's ADM based on school size, a district cost factor and an

additional 20 percent in funding for special, vocational and bilingual education. The formula also includes a special category of funding for transportation costs and Intensive Needs Students. The resulting “adjusted ADM” is used by the Department of Education & Early Development to distribute about \$1 billion a year to K-12 schools.

School District Audits

Are audits required?

State law requires that a public accountant who has no personal interest in district fiscal affairs conduct an annual audit of district accounts. The Board appoints the auditor.