



Anchorage School District

Educating All Students for Success in Life

Wednesday, Feb. 28, 2024

Yesterday, the Anchorage School Board held a [Special School Board Meeting](#) with only one agenda item - [ASD Memorandum #109](#): FY 2024-2025 Financial Plan and Budget Approval. Regular Board meetings usually take place the first and third Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m. Work sessions, committee meetings, and Board meetings are open to the public and can be watched live on the [Anchorage School District's YouTube](#) channel.

Background

This meeting came on the heels of the historic passage of [Senate Bill 140](#) (SB140) through the Alaska House of Representatives on Feb. 22 and the Alaska Senate on Feb. 26. SB140 addresses K-12 funding, charter schools, student transportation, correspondence schools, the Base Student Allocation, and support for reading improvements.

Additionally, just hours before the Board Meeting, Governor Mike Dunleavy held a [press briefing](#) to discuss the education bill, where he stated, "We need to fix a couple of things in that bill. We need to make sure that we're addressing the teacher retention issue. We need to make sure that the reading component in the bill... actually incentivizes good outcomes in reading. We need to work on the charter school part so that we can ensure that anybody that wants to attend a charter school can do that...We got half the job done. But if it's just going to be about money and nothing else, I'm not interested in having this bill become law."

The Board went into the meeting with the need to balance a nearly \$100 million deficit, and the preliminary budget included the recommendation to use the vast majority of the District's fund balance, reduce elementary immersion teacher positions, increase the Pupil to Teacher Ratio (PTR) by one for grades 4-12, reduce administrative costs, and reduce 18 IGNITE teacher positions, among other things.

Special Board Meeting Review

The Board Meeting began with public testimony. Six students and seven community members signed up to speak, almost all voicing their concerns for the potential removal of the IGNITE program from the FY25 preliminary budget. Written testimony can be viewed [here](#).

After hearing public testimony, the Board proceeded to the only action item: [ASD Memorandum #109](#): FY 2024-2025 Financial Plan and Budget Approval.

Board Member Carl Jacobs motioned, and Board Member Kelly Lessens seconded the motion, to make an [amendment](#) to the budget that would reinstate 70+ ASD employee positions into the budget at an increased cost of \$8,780,991. The amendment included:

- Reversing the elimination of 69.3 teacher positions, which included the 18 IGNITE educators, a topic which drew hours of passionate testimony from the community.
- Ensuring the pupil:counselor ratio is 300:1 or less at the big 8 comprehensive high schools.
- Allocating an additional 1.5 net counselor FTE across Chugiak, Service, and South High Schools so that each would get an additional 0.5 Counselor FTE.

The Board voted unanimously to pass the amendment.

During Board discussions, members thanked the Alaska Legislature for prioritizing public education and for overwhelmingly passing SB140. Member Carl Jacobs noted 93% of the legislature passed SB140, and that the amendment injects \$8.7 million, or roughly a \$100 BSA increase, to benefit student outcomes. Jacobs noted Governor Mike Dunleavy publicly supported a \$300 BSA, so this would be a cautious amendment.

Board President Margo Bellamy asked ASD Chief Financial Officer Andy Ratliff to give an analysis of the risk in the amendment, given SB140 has yet to be signed into law.

"We've always budgeted based on what's in current statute." Ratliff said. "It's not without risk. If we don't get this money sometime in the next few months we'll have to come back and make these reductions again." Ratliff added that if there were an increase to the BSA, then the District would be able to apply for the local match from the city.

During his comments, Superintendent Dr. Jharrett Bryantt said, "this amendment is reasonable and supports our goals and outcomes." He added that assuming a BSA increase veers away from our standard practice, but we would do our best to manage a worst case scenario if it occurred. You can listen to Dr. Bryantt's full comments [here](#).

The amended budget passed with a 6-1 Board vote, with the only nay being from Board Member Dave Donley.

Multiple amendments were presented and discussed during the Board Meeting, with only the amendment described above approved. Discussions regarding additional amendments that were not approved begin at 1:24 into the meeting, and can be viewed [here](#).

The Anchorage School Board has directed the District to work on next steps now that it has approved the preliminary budget as amended, and Governor Dunleavy

has given the Legislature a deadline, 13 days left, to rework the Education Reform Bill. A revised preliminary budget will be available to the public on our [FY25 Budget Solutions webpage](#) by Monday, March 4th per the charter deadline with the Municipality of Anchorage.

We hope that you find these updates valuable. As always, we welcome your feedback and thoughts at TeamASD@asdk12.org. Have a great day.

Sincerely,

Team ASD

