

Section 1: School Finance

SF-1 Education Trust Fund (ETF) Budget and State Revenue

AASB urges the Legislature to:

- Ensure equitable and adequate K-12 public education funding, with a focus on classroom divisors and staffing levels.
- Maintain and expand stable revenue sources for sustainable, recurring expenditures by:
 - Preserving existing sales, use, and income taxes
 - Exploring new revenue streams
 - Reviewing and potentially reducing tax exemptions or credits.
- Fully fund K-12 public education and any new mandates.
- Oppose diversion of funds from public education institutions.
- Appropriate funding for long-term capital projects.

SF-2 ETF Rolling Reserve Act

AASB applauds efforts to prevent ETF proration and supports reasonable provisions to implement key education initiatives during economic uncertainty. AASB believes any reserves captured through the Rolling Reserve Act should be allocated exclusively to public education institutions, with K-12 public education receiving, at a minimum, the same percentage of funding appropriated in the ETF. AASB asks the Legislature to examine how much revenue is diverted annually from operations to fund one-time or supplemental appropriations. AASB advocates \$1 billion in non-recurring revenue be appropriated for K-12 capital outlay. AASB opposes earmarking revenue allocated to local boards through the ETF Advancement and Technology Fund (EAT).

SF-3 Local Property Taxes

AASB supports increasing minimum local property taxes required to qualify for state education funding. AASB also supports efforts to:

- Give school boards authority to call for property tax referenda.
- Reappraise property annually.
- Provide an incentive to communities to raise school taxes.

AASB opposes statutory restrictions on school tax levies or property tax revenue collection, including current use laws. AASB urges the development of an accurate, comprehensive and regularly reviewed state database on local education property taxes to objectively analyze the impact of state initiatives.

SF-4 State Education Funding Formula

AASB supports a K-12 funding program that promotes achievement for all students.

The formula should adequately and equitably provide the full annual cost of a basic educational program by including additional funding (weights) based on student needs and relevant community characteristics. The state funding formula should provide local school boards maximum flexibility to determine system budgets, staffing and programs. AASB supports a funding program which:

- Provides stable funding.
- Defines each school system's wealth based on its tax base.
- Incorporates both local and state revenue.
- Prevents loss of funds for any school system while transitioning a new program.
- Regularly assesses program adequacy and equity.
- Provides state funding for all transportation costs, including those for student activities.
- Recognizes the unique attributes of systems/schools such as size and geographic location in urban, rural, isolated or high-growth areas.

SF-5 Tax Reform

AASB urges policymakers to develop and enact a comprehensive, equitable tax reform package that adequately generates additional funds for public schools.

SF-6 Federal Funding

AASB strongly supports full funding of federal education programs and innovative reforms, including adequate resources for state and local program management. AASB supports flexibility within federal programs for local school boards to allocate funds based on local needs.

SF-7 State Bond Issues and Capital Outlay

AASB supports timely issuance and release of state bonds to fund long-term, K-12 capital improvement projects, provided there is adequate ETF revenue to cover debt service. AASB opposes state-level prioritization of local building needs and use of bond issue money for non-capital expenses, particularly financing initial payments. AASB urges legislation that specifies allocations for accrued interest, mandates, regular reporting on discretionary allocations and requires a competitive bid process for selection of bonding officials.

AASB urges the state to use various reserve funds to provide no- or low-cost construction loans to local school boards.

SF-8 Simplified Sellers Use Tax (SSUT)

AASB supports both an increased state share of SSUT revenue for the ETF and an increased local share of SSUT revenue to offset continued decline in traditional sales tax revenue. Local school boards receiving traditional sales tax revenue should receive a proportional share of local SSUT revenue.

Section 2: Governance

G-1 Local Governance

Local control without restrictive mandates enables local boards to:

- Promote transparency in governance with corresponding accountability for public funds, student achievement, leadership and management.
- Provide flexibility to best meet local needs.

AASB opposes state and federal legislative measures limiting authority and autonomy of local school boards over school management, including policy, curriculum and instruction, discipline, personnel, health and safety and financial decisions. Site-based authority should be granted by local school boards, not legislated.

G-2 Superintendent Selection and Removal

AASB supports local school board appointment of superintendents, including those who are currently elected. AASB opposes any effort to limit or restrict a board's ability to terminate the superintendent.

G-3 Competitive Bid Law

AASB supports revising the bid law to allow school boards to manage construction projects without general contractors and other efforts to increase flexibility. AASB opposes requiring bids for professional services and other efforts expanding bid law for school boards.

G-4 School Board Member Qualifications, Training, and Governance

AASB supports both elective and appointive methods of selecting school board members. AASB opposes changing the school board member selection method without a local vote. AASB advocates for the following best practices:

- Select school board members based on character.
- Prohibit the appointing authority from removing board members prior to term expiration.
- Non-partisan selection of school board members.
- Prohibit employees from serving on boards which employ them.
- Oppose city mayors serving on the city board of education.

AASB supports full compliance with the School Board Governance Act of 2012, including local school board member orientation, ongoing training and modeling the Code of Conduct. AASB urges members to utilize the association's services for promoting good governance.

G-5 School Choice

AASB opposes diverting state funds to private, church or home schools in any manner and believes state funds should exclusively support public schools. AASB advocates that non-public schools receiving state or federally funded tax credits, scholarships, education savings accounts or vouchers should adhere to the same accountability standards as public schools, including:

- Participation in the state assessment program.
- Publication of disaggregated assessment data to measure student achievement.
- Compliance with state laws and requirements, including the state report card and financial audits.

G-6 Academic Accountability and Intervention

AASB supports a statewide accountability system, aligned with the federal report card, to measure and improve student performance through academic achievement outcomes and other State Board of Education (SBOE)-approved indicators. AASB supports an accountability system that accurately captures and communicates performance at school, system and state levels using both academic and non-academic indicators proven to impact student achievement. AASB supports state intervention in school systems failing to meet either required financial and/or academic benchmarks, provided local school officials first have the opportunity and resources to correct deficiencies. AASB also supports state authority to reconstitute schools under intervention, including the flexibility to re-staff persistently low-performing schools without specific statutory constraints.

G-7 School System Rights

AASB recognizes the rights of cities and counties to operate separate school systems and supports voluntary consolidation of schools and school systems.

G-8 Constitutional Reform

AASB supports constitutional reform. AASB believes constitutional revisions should include proposals that:

- Recognize K-12 education as an essential state function.
- Permit greater local autonomy.
- Permit fundraising mechanisms for public schools.
- Eliminate discriminatory language.
- Recognize the right to equal protection.

Section 3: Personnel

P-1 Tenure

AASB supports efforts to refine tenure and performance evaluation practices that:

- Link student progress/growth as a factor in evaluating effective teacher performance for both obtaining and retaining tenure.
- Give school boards final authority in personnel decisions.
- Allow school boards flexibility to transfer teachers during the school year, with limited teacher appeal rights.
- Provide school boards with disciplinary options for teachers which cannot be appealed beyond the school board level.
- Limit tenure eligibility to teachers.
- Extend the probationary status period to five years.
- Offer an alternative to the tenure system.

P-2 Collective Bargaining

AASB opposes compulsory union membership and collective bargaining for school personnel. AASB opposes strikes by educational employees.

P-3 State Retirement System

AASB supports a cost-effective and financially stable retirement system for school employees. AASB opposes changes that adversely affect current participants or increase state costs without thorough evaluation. AASB supports allowing retired educators to return to teaching while retaining their retirement benefits, provided these additional years of service do not count toward further retirement benefits.

P-4 Employee Compensation

AASB supports competitive salaries that are equitable across employee categories, promoting effective teacher recruitment and retention. AASB advocates salary increases based on state allocations. The association encourages school boards to consider merit-based pay, rewards for additional academic achievements and incentives for teachers in high-need subjects and underserved geographical areas. AASB supports compensating teachers at their equivalent hourly rate on a daily rate schedule for activities such as summer professional development, summer reading and math camps and summer school.

AASB supports incentives for educators achieving highly qualified or credentialed status, including National Board Certification, as well as for placement in high-need geographic and specialty content areas.

P-5 Payroll Deductions

AASB opposes mandates requiring school boards to process payroll deductions for employee contributions to a political entity or other private or public organizations. If payroll deductions are mandated, AASB believes school boards should be able to assess an administrative fee and/or require a minimum participation level.

P-6 Background Check

AASB supports national criminal background checks for:

- Prospective school board members (elected or appointed), at the candidates' expense
- Public school employees, paid for by the prospective employees'
- Volunteers with direct, unsupervised contact with children.

AASB believes school boards should have the authority to conduct national criminal background checks on any employee whenever reasonable suspicion arises. AASB believes non-public schools and agencies should have the option to conduct such checks.

P-7 Teacher Certification

AASB supports programs that promote teacher success. AASB advocates a state teacher certification process to:

- Promote higher standards for teachers, including additional subject-area requirements in their licensure fields and proficiency in instructional technology.
- Require universities to provide remedial assistance to underperforming graduates.
- Link state authorization of teacher preparation programs with graduate performance.
- Ensure teacher preparatory programs are aligned with current state initiatives and practices.
- Expand teacher internships, mentoring programs and alternative pathways into the profession.
- Require initial teacher certification testing in content areas.
- Offer certification reciprocity to teachers that earn valid credentials in other states.

P-8 Professional Development and Professional Pathways

AASB supports increasing quality professional development opportunities for certified staff, including educational technology training and educational programs for other staff. AASB advocates direct allocation of all state professional development funds to school boards, allowing targeted training aligned with school goals. AASB urges school boards to establish partnerships with higher education institutions to promote professional development. AASB urges SBOE oversight to require strong accountability and efficient delivery of consistent, high-quality content by state in-service centers.

P-9 School Leadership

AASB recognizes and values school superintendents, principals, assistant principals, directors and other administrators as vital members of the school management team. The association supports reinforcement of these leadership roles through training programs, assessment centers, regular evaluations and other similar initiatives. AASB urges regular assessment to ensure the availability of qualified administrative candidates.

P-10 Ethics Law

AASB supports changes to the ethics law to exclude public school employees from the two-year “revolving door” provision. AASB supports employees’ right to seek public office and believes such employees should not be compensated at public expense while serving as a public official unless using leave or flex time under an approved board policy applicable to all employees.

P-11 Nepotism

AASB encourages school boards to adopt policies prohibiting employees from directly supervising their immediate family members. AASB supports reasonable restrictions on the employment and promotion of family members of sitting local board members and superintendents within the same school system.

P-12 Teacher Shortage

AASB urges immediate and ongoing efforts to address the teacher shortage through a multi-pronged approach that includes improving teacher recruitment and retention and enhancing the education career pipeline.

Retention efforts:

- Increase teacher salaries and improve Tier 2 teacher retirement benefits.
- Provide incentives for retired teachers to return to the classroom.
- Provide incentives for educators to defer retirement.

Pipeline quality and expansion efforts:

- Recruit students and other professionals to the teaching field, including initiatives at the high school level encouraging students to pursue education careers.

- Fund academic scholarships or provide student loan repayment to those pursuing education degrees.
- Offer incentives to those who commit to teach in Alabama for a specific number of years in subject areas or geographical areas with critical teacher shortages.
- Allow alternative competency-based educator preparation programs.
- Expand opportunities for work experience to be used in lieu of course work in high-needs academic subjects.

Section 4: Student Achievement

A-1 Special Education and Special Needs

AASB supports Congress reauthorizing the Individuals with Disabilities with Education Act (IDEA) and increasing the federal share of special education funding to at least 40% of cost.

AASB encourages school officials to be responsive to children with special needs and provide them with education services in the least restrictive environment, including placement in the regular classroom where appropriate. AASB supports early detection of student learning disabilities and advocates local decision-making for student placement. AASB opposes providing medical care unrelated to the disability and expanding recognized disabilities under state and federal education law. AASB supports less restrictive federal special education laws and regulations governing discipline or other issues that disrupt the learning environment.

A-2 Compulsory Attendance Age/Kindergarten

AASB supports compulsory school attendance from ages six to 17. AASB supports mandatory completion of kindergarten before first grade entry.

A-3 School Climate

AASB recognizes the importance of a positive school climate promoting safety and security during both instructional time and extracurricular activities. To that end, AASB encourages school boards to:

- Adopt plans to ensure safety.
- Aggressively target “bullying” behavior.
- Ban weapons on school premises and educate students about their dangers.
- Involve community groups and agencies in school safety plans.
- Require regular inspection of school facilities and equipment.
- Encourage federal and state leaders to commit resources to violence prevention and to enhance school safety measures.
- Join forces with community agencies to prevent/reduce gang activity.

A-4 Student Health and Well-Being

AASB encourages local school boards to support a coordinated school health program encompassing health and physical education, health, nutrition, counseling and social services, a healthy school environment, staff and family health promotion and community involvement. AASB supports public schools free of health and environmental hazards and encourages school boards to test for such hazards. AASB urges school boards to:

- Partner with the community to promote programs that enhance students’ overall physical, intellectual and emotional well-being.
- Require students to have certain immunizations and communicable disease testing prior to school entry.
- Adopt practical and flexible policies for students with special health needs to promote privacy and protect students and staff.

- Promote innovative nutrition and physical activity programs to foster healthy student lifestyles.
- Ban use of tobacco products and electronic cigarettes (vaping) in school facilities and at school-related events in public venues.

AASB supports Congress maintaining and school systems implementing the National School Breakfast and Lunch Program.

A-5 Student Conduct

AASB supports local decision-making regarding student discipline. AASB urges school boards to implement various strategies that guide student behavior, promote achievement and foster a conducive learning environment, including efforts to:

- Develop fair, firm student conduct codes with parent and community input, permitting flexibility to consider student age and specific offense while prohibiting corporal punishment.
- Encourage evidence-based positive behavior programs and discipline alternatives.
- Craft programs and policies to eliminate violent and disruptive behaviors such as bullying, verbal disrespect, racial insensitivity and harassment, which can negatively impact students' self-esteem and academic achievement.
- Adopt conflict resolution programs such as peer mediation.
- Provide state-funded interventions such as alternative schools or classes and in-school suspension for continually disruptive students.
- Link school behavior with student privileges.
- Adopt random drug testing policies within legal parameters.
- Establish comprehensive strategies for all students, including academic and behavior interventions, prevention and multi-tiered supports.
- Regularly review discipline data to ensure equitable treatment.

AASB advocates broader school board authority to restrict attendance or remove students charged with or convicted of serious off-campus offenses for protection of students and staff.

A-6 Student Achievement

AASB believes all students should graduate prepared for college or a career. AASB advocates a student-centered approach prioritizing continuous improvement through data-driven decision making, high-quality instruction and innovation. AASB supports reducing barriers to achievement and setting measurable performance goals for students, grades and school and staff. School boards should focus their leadership efforts on student achievement through measures to:

- Align policies, programs, school board and community resources with high academic expectations and goals.
- Use accountability, evaluation and reporting mechanisms to set, measure and support student achievement goals.
- Involve the community and parents in developing and supporting academic goals.
- Recognize and reward student and staff achievement.

A-7 Student Assessment and Education Standards

AASB supports high academic standards and an expectation of college and career readiness for all students, demonstrated through grade-level proficiency and objective grading/assessments, with curriculum and instruction aligned with state standards and assessments. AASB supports an assessment program focused on instructional improvement and monitoring student growth. AASB supports Alabama's College and Career Ready Standards (ACCRS) as a baseline for increasing rigor and achievement for all students.

AASB believes graduation standards should be established by the SBOE and urges school boards to implement strategies helping students meet these requirements. AASB supports the College and Career Readiness Indicator (CCRI) as a high school graduation requirement and urges the SBOE to closely work with resource-limited school systems to ensure equitable opportunities to fulfill requirements.

A-8 Career and Technical Education and Workforce Development

AASB supports state and local efforts to research, develop and implement modern career and technical education aligned with workforce needs through partnerships at local, state and regional levels, including public-private partnerships and collaboration with higher education institutions. AASB supports school board authority to design secondary school curricula that prepare students for life success, encompassing rigorous academic programs for all students, advanced courses for college-bound youth and sufficient skills preparation for graduates entering the workforce.

A-9 Textbook and Instructional Materials Selection

AASB supports local school board authority to select textbooks not rejected by the state textbook committee or SBOE. AASB advocates for board discretion to use state funds to purchase electronic textbooks or later editions. AASB urges parent, teacher and technical expert involvement in evaluating and selecting textbooks and instructional materials and supports publishing rubrics used to identify high-quality materials.

A-10 Technology

AASB supports using communication and information technologies to improve instruction, broaden curriculum and enhance community and student services. AASB encourages school boards to integrate technology throughout the curriculum at all grade levels, aligning with industry best practices and complying with data protection and privacy laws. AASB urges state and national leaders to fund educational technology, including virtual and distance learning. AASB supports a comprehensive, state-funded technology plan allowing school boards flexibility to meet local needs without requiring long-term financing.

AASB urges proactive cybersecurity efforts to protect school system data, operations and infrastructure. AASB encourages a multi-pronged approach encompassing cyber-attack threat assessment, prevention, emergency plans, mitigation and response, as well as regular assessment of critical technology components.

A-11 Instructional Calendar and Days

AASB advocates a school calendar with a minimum of 185 instructional days or equivalent for students per year with local flexibility. AASB encourages schools to proactively address absenteeism by promoting attendance and identifying early warning signs of student disengagement. AASB urges school boards to:

- Provide additional instructional time for students requiring assistance.
- Maximize current instructional time.
- Adopt a calendar that complements local needs.
- Allow alternative scheduling.

AASB opposes efforts to place any restrictions on setting the school calendar or otherwise disrupt the instructional day.