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## **Federal and State Mandates and Requirements for Anchorage School District, November 2011**

One of the challenges facing the Anchorage School District is meeting requirements and mandates imposed by federal and state agencies and foundations. These requirements cover both program offerings and reporting on specific program and general education outcomes. Many are conditions for receiving funds, but some, such as federal accountability requirements, are imposed without funding. Reporting mandates can be time-consuming and expensive, adding to the workload of district staff and reducing the time they can spend on program operations. The district tracks data on students and program outcomes as part of its regular operations, but federal programs often require additional data or different ways of reporting. On the other hand, federal funds pay for critical services for students with needs beyond what the district can afford from general appropriations. Those include services for students who face challenges as a result of living in poverty or having disabilities, or whose parents have jobs that require them to move frequently. The district does a balancing act, weighing the benefits of additional funds from federal, state, and private sources and the reporting necessary to keep those funds coming in.

In this brief we provide an overview of federal and state mandates and reporting requirements across a broad array of programs. The programs we discuss are some of the largest, but this is not a comprehensive list of all the federal and state programs operating in the district or of all the reports produced for state and federal agencies and foundations that support district programs.

### **No Child Left Behind**

“No Child Left Behind” is the current iteration of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act. It imposes many program and reporting requirements on states, districts, and schools. It holds schools accountable for the performance of all students, and requires schools, districts, and states to measure whether they are making “adequate yearly progress” in educating students, with the goal of having all students be academically proficient by the 2013-202014 school year. Congress is considering revisions in the act, but as of November 2011 the requirements had not changed.

No Child Left Behind mandates that districts assess students—including those who have limited proficiency in English and those with disabilities—annually in language arts and math in grades 3-8, and once in grades 10-12; in science, assessments are required three times across grades 3-12. It also requires that schools and the district prepare an annual report card for parents and the community on school and district performance, based on standardized assessments. It requires that teachers of core academic subjects, as well as other educators (including paraprofessionals) who work in Title I programs, be “highly qualified.” Title I programs and schools serve low-income students—and if such schools are not making “adequate yearly progress,” parents must be notified and told they have options, including the option to transfer their children to other schools at the district’s expense. In Anchorage, there are 15 Title I elementary schools and one middle school that have not made adequate progress for several consecutive years. The district provides transportation to students who choose to transfer out of those schools.

The reporting requirements for No Child Left Behind are considerable. The district has to prepare or compile seventeen reports to stay in compliance with the law. Some reports, such as the Alaska Certified and Classified Staff Accounting Data Collection Report, fill multiple purposes. But most are in direct response to U.S. Department of Education requirements, such as requiring individual teacher and paraprofessional development plans describing how these educators will attain “highly qualified” status. Most of the reports are sent to the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development annually; the department then compiles them and transmits data for the state to the U.S. Department of Education. A handful of reports are completed on an “as needed” basis.

### **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is a federal statute authorizing federal aid for educating children with disabilities. The statute details an intricate system for identifying, evaluating, and providing free and appropriate special education services to eligible students. The act requires school districts receiving federal funds to provide a “free, appropriate public education” to eligible children with disabilities in the “least restrictive environment.” To meet the federal reporting requirements of this act, the district produces 10 reports for the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development and submits to three annual audits by department personnel. One audit, the annual Intensive Claims audit, reviews student file information to determine the level of individualized services provided to special education students; this audit is directly related to additional state funds provided for students receiving intensive services. Another audit measures and reports the performance of the school district in educating students with disabilities on 20 indicators, including such items as graduation rates, discipline, preschool entry and outcomes, and transitions into and out of special services.

### **Title III English Language Learners Program**

Title III is the provision of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (better known as No Child left Behind) that discusses educating children who have limited proficiency speaking English. Receiving Title III funds requires districts to provide professional development that improves services to students with limited proficiency in English, as well as language instruction programs aimed at increasing the English proficiency and overall academic achievement of such students. Many people are familiar with the broad accountability requirements of No Child Left Behind, such as requiring schools to make adequate yearly progress. However, that act also changed accountability requirements for Title III, for the first time mandating that states measure the progress of students with limited proficiency in English. The Anchorage School District’s Title III program is called the English Language Learners (ELL) Program, and it currently serves more than 5,400 students. It focuses on teaching English as a second language and supporting the academic needs of students from homes where languages other than English are spoken. The district provides six reports annually (two with quarterly data included) to the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, describing how many students are being served, their progress, and their English proficiency at different points in the year. It also provides one report to Catholic Social Services, in support of that organization’s reporting on a program funded under a Refugee Impact Grant.

### **Title IC Migrant Education Program**

The Migrant Education Program is a federally funded program serving students from families that travel outside school district boundaries for seasonal work. It's intended to help districts improve educational opportunities and outcomes for migrant children. Anchorage's program identifies educational and social services needs for families and students, and also works to improve family literacy and reading readiness of students pre-K through grade 3. It served over 3,600 students as of November 2011; in Anchorage, most of those students are from families that move for seasonal commercial fishing. The district prepares five reports annually and one bi-annually for the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, discussing which children are being served, how many are new to the district or continuing, and which students get priority for services because they had poor scores on state standardized tests and faced academic disruptions during the school year.

### **Child in Transition/Homeless Project**

The Child in Transition/Homeless Project facilitates collaboration among teachers, nurses, counselors, administrators, and community agencies to support homeless children and teenagers and their families. The district follows the guidelines of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001, reauthorized as part of No Child Left Behind, to determine student eligibility for services as well as what services are provided. Those guidelines classify as homeless any student with no "fixed, adequate, or regular" place to live. That includes those living in cars or campgrounds, but also those living in shelters, hotels or motels, or with relatives or friends. The district reports annually to the Alaska Department of Education on services and activities provided, data on who is being served, barriers faced by homeless students, where they stayed at night, and the educational outcomes of those served.

### **Title VII Indian Education Program**

In addition to the federally mandated programs described above, the district also receives competitive federal funding for a number of initiatives. One is the Title VII Indian Education Program, aimed at helping indigenous students succeed both academically and culturally. The program provides tutoring, cultural enrichment programs, Native language studies, and counseling. A major current effort is Project Puqigtut, a three-year grant program providing online courses for students who need to catch up or get ahead on their core academic coursework. The district does not report on Title VII as part of the broader reporting done for No Child Left Behind and other entitlement programs, but it does have to complete an annual performance report for the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Indian Education.

### **Preschool Programs**

Eleven Anchorage schools have preschool programs (not including federally funded early-childhood special education programs). Two are jointly funded by the state and federal governments; the others are funded primarily by the federal government and are largely for low-income children. The district is required to report to the state on the preschool services it provides, as well as enrollment, teacher qualifications, and student outcomes, as part of the state's Pre-Elementary-School Annual Assessment report.