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Anchorage School District - Educating All Students for Success in Life



Anchorage School District
Educating All Students for Success in Life

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ASDDIGITAL

A message from the Superintendent

Dear ASD Families and Staff,

Welcome to ASD Digital, the new external newsletter that was formerly "ASD Connect."

ASD Digital will be the place to see all the exciting things happening in schools as well as important initiatives that will help educate all students for success.

I hope you all had a restful winter break. I am thrilled to welcome each and every one of you back to ASD.

This new semester brings with it challenges and exciting opportunities. We are pushing forward on our major initiatives, which include the Academies of Anchorage, Moving to Middle School, Reading for Life, and School Start Times. I want to acknowledge the team effort needed to accomplish these endeavors. Insight from ASD

Snow Removal



Snow Removal Update

ASD's Operations Team has been working to remove snow from campuses, including roofs, since the first snowfall in November 2023. Fast forward to February 2024, concerns are growing across the city for any large buildings with sizable snow loads. ASD is also increasing its focus on the structural safety of ASD buildings to be prepared for follow-on snow events through the rest of the winter. All buildings remain safe at this time.

employees, including principals, teachers, and support staff, is reflected in each initiative.

I am confident that, with our staff's expertise and passion, ASD will continue to provide a high-quality and enriching experience for your students.

Throughout this letter we will dive deeper into the latest updates on these [major initiatives](#).

Recently, the School Board held its annual board retreat to review and modify its goals and guardrails for the District. We made incredible progress during our retreat, and the goals will serve as the District's north star to achieve the bold and ambitious vision the community has set for us. We look forward to sharing ASD's revised goals and guardrails later this semester!

During the coming months, you can expect to receive continued updates on the District's Fiscal Year 2025 budget, as well as legislative updates and School Board meeting recaps. Look for these updates and opportunities to provide ASD leadership feedback on how we can better support your child over the course of this semester.

Let's embrace this semester with enthusiasm, collaboration, and a shared commitment to excellence.

We value the community's contributions and I look forward to working alongside each of you over the coming months.

Together, we can make a positive impact on the lives of our students and contribute to the overall success of the ASD community.

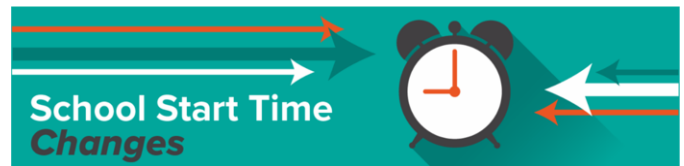
Here's to a fantastic semester ahead!

Sincerely,

Superintendent Bryantt

To maintain the highest level of safety, crews have prioritized snow removal based on how roofs were designed and constructed. This practice will continue until conditions change. In addition, ASD has an engineer inspecting snow loads on buildings to help Operations further prioritize any roofs that may need immediate attention. These analyses may reprioritize snow removal efforts to keep our buildings safe for students and staff. ASD has many old buildings, so inspecting roofs for weaknesses is a routine event across the District's structures.

Again, all buildings remain safe at this time. There have been no indications of roof failures or indications of potential failure.



School start time changes are happening in two phases. One began in August of 2023, with the remaining one in August 2024.

School Start Times

The District is continuing to plan for adjusted school start times for next school year.

ASD is participating in regularly occurring meetings with Anchorage after-school providers who are also adjusting schedules based on the school start/end for next school year.

[View new school start times](#)





Moving to Middle School

Seven of the District's comprehensive middle schools and Stellar Secondary are preparing to welcome sixth-graders next school year.

School walkthroughs are complete and essential facility and technology needs have been gathered for the transition of students and teachers. This month, middle school counselors are visiting elementary schools to talk with current 5th and 6th grade students (next year's sixth and seventh grade students) about the changes and to have them indicate their preferred electives.

Middle School Program Expo

A Middle School Program Expo was held in January for district staff. Sessions focused on the middle school academic program and collaboration time, and guidance was provided on District and State requirements for teaching at the middle school level.

Dimond Estates neighborhood re-boundary

On January 9, the School Board approved the District's recommendation to re-boundary the Dimond Estates neighborhood from Goldenview Middle School and South Anchorage High School to Mears Middle School and Dimond High School starting in the 2024-25 school year. This is the only boundary change taking effect next school year 2024-25. For more information, see [the Dimond Estates Town Hall Information website.](#)



ASD's Lottery is open! Apply today! The District is taking applications between now and March 21, 2024. ASD offers additional schools or programs outside of the typical neighborhood school. The District utilizes a randomized lottery system to provide equal opportunity for all students who would like to participate in one of these alternative schools or programs. To participate in a school or program outside your child's neighborhood school, a lottery application must be submitted by March 21, 2024.

[Find Out All The Lotto Information Here](#)

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Alternative Schools & Programs

EXPO

This is an opportunity to come and learn about the unique schools and programs that ASD has to offer.

**Saturday,
Feb. 10, 2024**

Noon – 4 p.m.

Begich Middle School
7440 Creekside Center Dr.

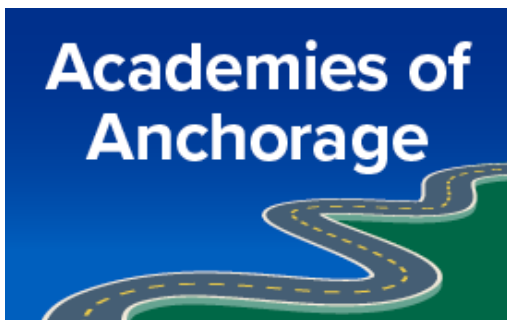
ASD's spring 2024 Alternative Schools and Programs EXPO will take place on Saturday, Feb. 10, from noon to 4 p.m. at Begich Middle School.

This is an opportunity for the public to come and learn about the unique schools and programs that ASD has to offer, including:

- ◀ ABC (Back to Basics) Programs
- ◀ AKChoice Virtual Learning Program

- ▾ Alaska Middle College School (AMCS)
- ▾ Alternative Schools
- ▾ ASD Homeschool Programs
- ▾ Career & Technical Education (CTE) Programs
- ▾ Charter Schools
- ▾ High School Credit Recovery Programs
- ▾ Indigenous and Migrant Education
- ▾ Language Immersion Programs
- ▾ Montessori
- ▾ Open Optional Programs
- ▾ Preschool Programs
- ▾ And more

Academies of Anchorage



Planning is underway for high school transformation in ASD through the Academies of Anchorage initiative!

This month, the "big eight" high schools will each build a proposal outlining what academies and pathways their community would like to offer at their campus. The proposals which will be built by principal-led sub-committees at each high school, will also include input from student, parent, and staff participants. Their objective is to develop a proposal of pathways that would have broad interest and reach. The recommendations will be presented to the Career Focused Academy Tactic Team by Feb 29.

There will be two more Community Convenings, one in February and one in April, where the Academies of Anchorage master plan will be finalized. Academies for each of the comprehensive high schools will be named and career pathways identified by May of this year.

Freshman Academy launch set for the 2024-25 school year

Freshman Academy will start at the big eight high schools in the fall of the 2024-25 school year, where incoming freshmen will explore and identify their desired career pathway. The following school year (2025-26), sophomores will begin Career Academies as the first class to do so.

Questions and feedback

Stay tuned for the latest developments through the [Academies of Anchorage webpage](#), including the FAQ section that is regularly updated. You may also submit a question at the bottom of the [Academies of Anchorage Hot Topics page](#), or by emailing questions to academies@asdk12.org

Academies of Anchorage Web Page

Reading for Life

The district is making a series of adjustments to its reading instruction to help students become better readers. Reading is foundational for students' academic journeys, future opportunities and overall success. Research shows time and again that reading proficiency by the end of the third year sets students on a path to excel academically and unlocks a world of possibilities for their futures.

ASD's goal is for 80% of third-grade students to be strong readers by 2026. To achieve that goal, there will be a number of changes in the 2023-24 school year.

New reading curriculum – The district is implementing a new reading curriculum for students in grades K-3. (Grades 4-5 will be implemented in the following 2024-25 school year.) The district's dedicated teachers and staff are provided specialized training to effectively implement this curriculum.

New state requirements – The Alaska Reads Act has six strategic components designed to provide support to schools so all students read at grade level by the end of third grade. The new law incorporates a series of requirements for districts and teachers.

These adjustments present an opportunity for educators and parents to work together to support young readers and open up doors of opportunity and future success through the power of reading.



Reading For Life Video Series



The Anchorage School District recognizes February as Black History Month and will celebrate the achievements and history of African American educators here in Alaska and the United States.

Click the video link to see how Principal Mark Dawson honored Dr. Elthedra Davis, who was the first Black Principal in the Anchorage School District.

ASD Celebrates Black History Month: Dr. Etheldra Davis

ASD Celebrates School Board Appreciation Month



School Board Appreciation Month Video

Congratulations, Chantel Black AAESP Outstanding Assistant



Principal for the State of Alaska

Congrats to Ptarmigan Elementary Assistant Principial Chantel Black! The Alaska Association of Elementary School Principals (AAESP) announced that Ms. Black has been named the 2024 Outstanding Assistant Principal for the State of Alaska. She was surprised with the announcement during a student assembly at Ptarmigan Elementary on Tuesday, January 9th. Congratulations, Chantel!

Watch how Ptarmigan did the surprise announcement

Congratulations, Catherine Walker, National Teacher of the Year Finalist

Congratulations to Dimond High School science and career and technical education teacher Catherine Walker, who was recently named as one of the top four finalists for the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) 2024 National Teacher of the Year.

Walker who is the 2024 Alaska Teacher of the Year, develops problem-based, career-oriented lessons with a focus on sustainability and stewardship of natural resources, while encouraging students to build empathy and collaboration to solve problems in their community.

She supports students who are traditionally underrepresented in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) careers by opening her classroom to business partners who allow the students to envision themselves in future career pathways.

Congrats Catherine!



Cat Walker National Teacher of the Year Nominee Announcement Video

Governor Dunleavy's State of the State Speech highlights Alaska Native Cultural Charter School



Check out the Alaska Native Cultural Charter School which was highlighted by Governor Mike Dunleavy in his 2024 State of the State Speech. See how Alaska Native Cultural Charter School builds student success through traditional cultural learning.

Watch: Alaska Native Cultural Charter School Spotlight

2024-2025 Budget Solutions



At its January 9 meeting, the School Board approved budget guidance as presented by the Administration. Since then, the Administration has been working with departments to produce a balanced budget that will be presented to the Board at the February 6, 2024 meeting. With a deficit of roughly \$98 million, ASD faces serious headwinds going into this budget season. Securing a substantial and permanent increase to the BSA during the state legislative session is ASD's top legislative priority. The FY25 budget is expected to rely heavily on fund balance, roughly

Legislative Session Update



Last week, the Alaska State Legislature began the 2024 legislative session in Juneau. The topic of education funding is at the forefront of the legislature's discussions. Senate Bill 140, proposes to permanently raise the Base Student Allocation (BSA) formula by \$300, along with a number of other provisions concerning charter schools and correspondence school funding. ASD has taken an official position on this bill and shared that with the Legislature via [this letter](#) from Superintendent Bryantt and School Board President Bellamy.

\$70 million, to cover the deficit. The remaining balance is expected to come from a variety of reductions to departments, programs, and services.

Fiscal Year 2025 solutions hot topic page

ASD continues to advocate for a permanent BSA increase of \$1,413 this year to account for a 30% rise in inflation since 2017, which is when the last meaningful BSA increase occurred. The Senate has signaled that they will not accept anything lower than a \$680 BSA increase, which is what the Legislature approved last session. ASD will continue to engage with the House and Senate on the issue of education funding to ensure the unique needs of our District are met.

Additionally, the Senate Education Committee held a hearing on January 22 to get an update on implementation of the Alaska Reads Act. ASD staff Chris Opitz and Nicole Sommerville provided insightful comments to the committee on how ASD has navigated implementation of the Act.



FEMA

FEMA Youth Preparedness Council

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is pleased to announce that the application period for its Youth Preparedness Council (YPC) is now open.

FEMA created the Youth Preparedness Council in 2012 to bring together leaders in grades 8-11 from across the country who are interested in supporting disaster preparedness. The YPC offers an opportunity for teens passionate about emergency management, climate resilience, community preparedness, and mental health to engage directly with FEMA to share ideas and feedback, grow their leadership skills, and make a difference in their communities.

YPC members also participate in a biennial summit in Washington, D.C. (tentatively scheduled for July 2025) where they will network and learn more about emergency management with FEMA leaders and other preparedness professionals.

YPC members are chosen based on their interest in preparedness and helping others, their involvement in their community, and their aptitude for working on a team and as a leader. Those who apply should express what preparedness means to them and how their skills and background could strengthen FEMA's work. Successful applications will provide a well-rounded overview of applicants' interests and activities, and include examples from their schoolwork, community service, and leadership experiences. Written or video responses to major application questions are accepted. Applications can be completed online or in PDF format.

The online application opened on Jan. 22, 2024 and closes on March 4 at, 11:59 p.m. PT. Selected candidates will be notified of their status by June 2024.

Interested youth can apply on the YPC page on FEMA.gov.

For more information about the YPC or other youth-focused preparedness initiatives, send an email to FEMA-Prepare@fema.dhs.gov.

ASD Shine Bright



Check out the new podcast, ASD Shine Bright, which highlights the awesome things students and staff are doing in the Anchorage School District.

Listen to amazing stories, journeys, challenges, and successes.

[Watch the Podcast](#)

[Listen on Spotify](#)



**Bettye Davis
Youth Leadership
Summit**

Youth and Civic Engagement:
The Power of new Ideas and new Leadership

Friday, February 9, 2024
5–9 p.m.

This event is FREE and open to the community




This year's community-wide youth leadership event is primarily for youth grades 6-12, young adults aged 18-25, and the organizations that support these groups. This is a family-friendly event that will feature a special screening of the award-winning documentary 'The Body Politic,' with a visit and special commentary on the power of voting by the film's director/producer, Gabrielle Francis Paz Goodenough. Following the film will be a panel discussion on this year's theme.



52nd Annual Student Art Show
in celebration of March - National Youth Art Month

March 1 – April 7, 2024

Dream in Art

- A dream is a series of thoughts
- A dream is a series of images
- A dream is a series of sensations
- A dream is a cherished aspiration, ambition, or ideal
- Art can be a dream and one can dream in art

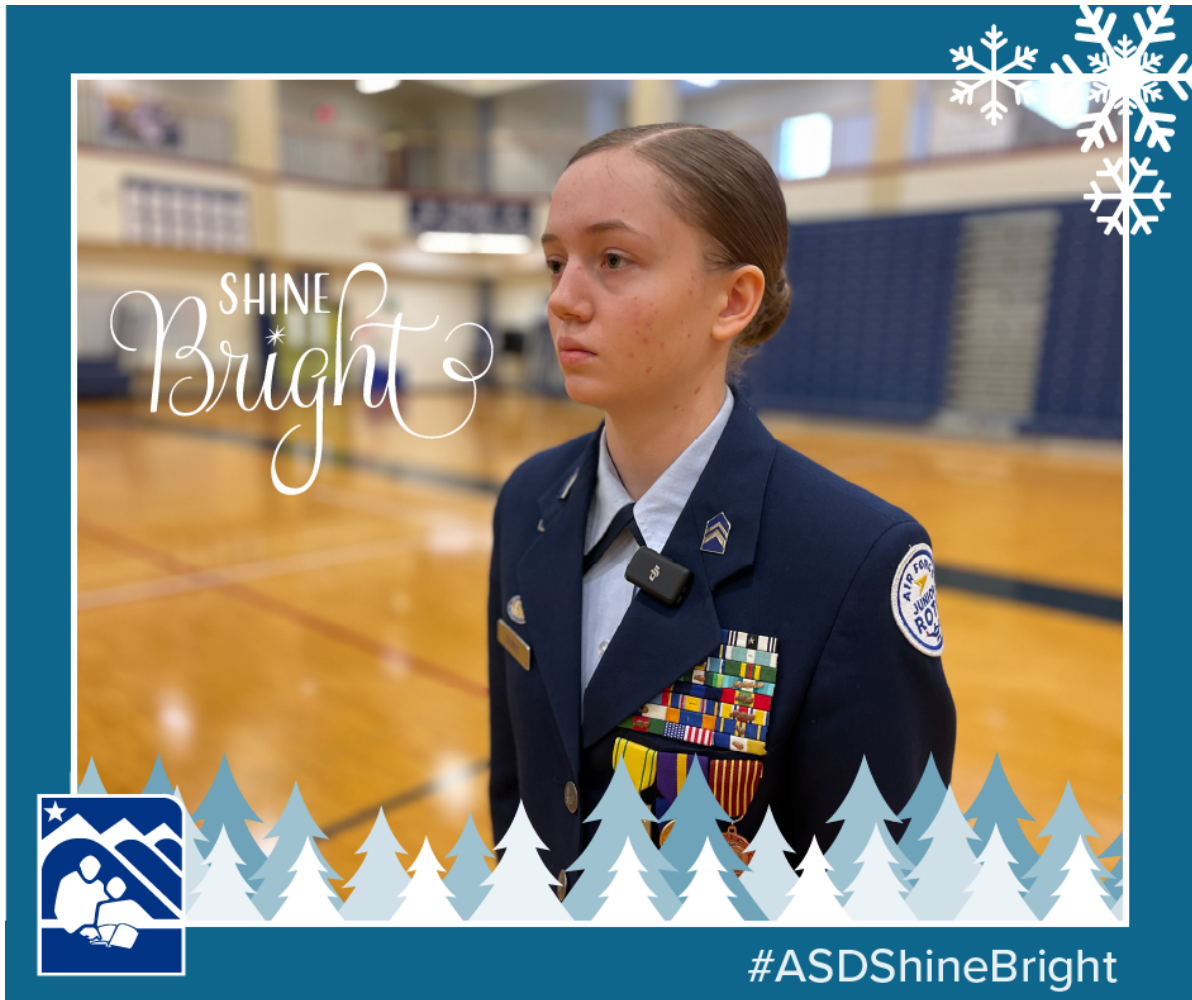
February is Visit Our Schools Month

February is ASD's Visit our Schools Month. This is a time when ASD schools may welcome community members, businesses, and parents to visit and learn more about their school's culture and educational opportunities.



[Click here for Visit Our Schools event info](#)

#ASDShineBright - Eagle River High School JROTC Scholarship Recipient - Payton Stokes



Watch How Payton Received Her Award

#ASDShineBright - Lake Otis Elementary BPO



Shout out to Lake Otis Elementary School BPO Rockstar Raul Henríquez-Amaya who took out a snow mountain to make sure students could cross the Lake Otis Parkway bridge to go to school.

We appreciate you Raul, and all of our Rockstar BPO's who fight the Alaska cold and snow to make it easier for students to come to school.

Follow ASD on social media as we shine a light on the small but bright moments that happen every day

in our schools. ASD will highlight stories of kindness, students accelerating individually and in group projects, and staff successes using the hashtag #ASDShineBright.

In the News

[From understudy to team leader: Muhammed Sabally is a rising star at East High](#)

[Chugiak's Hannah Shaha named Gatorade Alaska Girls Cross Country Athlete of the Year](#)

[Athlete of the Week: Zoie Campbell, a superhero that wears two masks as goalie for Dimond boys and girls hockey](#)

[West High's Aaron Hampton named Gatorade Alaska Football Player of the Year](#)

[Dozens of kids with blurry vision didn't have eyeglasses. An Anchorage school nurse stepped in to help.](#)

[Chugiak High School World Discovery Seminar Freshman Class Moose Harvest](#)

Anchorage School Board

Margo Bellamy, President
 Carl Jacobs, Vice President
 Kelly Lessens, Treasurer
 Dora Wilson, Clerk
 Dave Donley
 Pat Higgins
 Andy Holleman

[Email all board members](#)

Upcoming Events

Tues. Feb 6

School Board work session and
 School Board meeting

Sat. Feb 10

Alternative Schools and Program
 Expo

Tues. Feb 20

School Board work session and
 School Board meeting

Mon. Feb 19

No School - President's Day

Feb 21-22

Parent Teacher Conferences
 (Elementary Only)

Fri. Feb 23

Student Release - Professional

Development Day

Superintendent

Jharrett Bryantt, Ed.D.

Anchorage School District

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asdk12.org

Email Us

