

2020 Joint Position Statements



Adequate funding for public education is our number one priority

Priority Funding for Education

The State of Alaska must provide timely, reliable, and predictable revenue for schools, funding the actual cost of education in all districts and providing full funding for all initiatives, laws, and mandates that require additional services. Early notification of funding and forward funding are crucial to sound financial management, as well as recruitment and retention of quality educators.

Revenue Enhanced Fiscal Plan Imperative

Alaska has made progress by cutting the budget and restructuring the use of Permanent Fund earnings for sustainable funding of both the permanent fund dividend and a portion of government services. State expenditures have been cut by approximately 44% (\$3.5 billion) excluding dividends since FY13 when the current run of deficit spending began.

The need to finalize and implement a long-term, multi-revenue fiscal plan remains, especially with the commitment to additional PFD payments. Diversified revenue streams would address the remaining deficit and ensure the ability to fund service increases associated with economic development, inflation, and deferred maintenance capital requirements, while maintaining the existing minimal reserves in the CBR.

ACSA opposes cost shifting state expenditure responsibilities to local governments.

School Safety

ACSA advocates for safe and secure schools as a catalyst for the prevention of school crime and violence. ACSA supports improving the safety and well-being of our students. We support providing school communities and their school safety partners with quality information, resources, consultation, and training services. School safety is developed through maintaining effective, positive relationships among students, staff, communities, and tribes responding to local needs.

ACSA supports full funding for law enforcement, VPSOs, and state troopers. School districts should have access to these public safety supports.

Early Childhood Education

According to the 2019 Alaska Developmental Profile, nearly 70% of Alaska's students enter kindergarten lacking foundational preparation for learning. ACSA believes equitable access to fully funded, sustainable 0-5 and pre-K learning programs provides a foundation of excellent social, emotional and cognitive instruction to students. Research clearly demonstrates that early intervention and instruction is one of the best ways to increase student achievement across all demographics and create the greatest opportunity for all students to read proficiently by third grade. Early childhood education should be part of public school funding through the base student allocation.

Increasing Bandwidth in Under-served Areas

Alaska's students need and deserve the full transformative power of technology and equitable access to online resources. Students, teachers and school leaders of Alaska,

some of whom live in the most remote areas of the world, require access to modern technology in order to transform learning, create efficiencies, provide online health services, and keep pace with their peers globally.

ACSA supports continuing the Broadband Assistance Grant (BAG) and increasing the level of state-funded bandwidth for schools to a minimum of 25 megabits of download per second. This funding leverages federal E-Rate funds up to a 9:1 match to provide Alaska's students and educators fair access to the digital world.

Career and Technical Education

Career and Technical Education (CTE) for both rural and urban schools is critical to high academic standards and Alaska's economic growth and stability. Collaboration through professional learning with the Department of Education & Early Development (DEED), the Department of Labor & Workforce Development (DOL), and the University of Alaska with educators and industry-based professionals is needed for the academic integration of rigorous and relevant curriculum. ACSA fully supports voluntary internships that prepare students for high-earning, high-demand jobs, as well as dual credit offerings that provide opportunities to obtain an occupational certification or credential. These give students the opportunity to build future-ready skills. The alignment of CTE programs to meet the needs of local, tribal, regional and state labor markets through this collaboration is also important for improving on-time graduation rates, higher career earnings, and decreasing dropout percentages.

Preparing, Attracting and Retaining Qualified Educators

Retaining effective educators and leaders is essential to closing achievement gaps and increasing student performance in all subjects across all grade levels. ACSA strongly encourages the development of comprehensive statewide programs to prepare, attract and retain high quality educators and professionals. ACSA further recommends strengthening statewide and national recruiting efforts along with a renewed commitment to growing our own educators, teachers, principals, and superintendents.

The national teacher shortage makes the need to better align the state's K-12 system with the University of Alaska paramount. We strongly support one unified University of Alaska College of Education. Exploring innovative alternative pathways is needed to attract high quality educators to the education profession and address unique circumstances. A competitive state retirement system must be available.

Social, Emotional and Mental Health

Alaska's students endure extremely high rates of trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). One in two of Alaska's youth have lived through one or more ACEs by the time they begin kindergarten, and two in three will have one or more ACEs by the time they graduate. Higher exposure to trauma increases the likelihood of suicide, the second leading cause of death for American teenagers. Alaska has the highest rate of teen suicide attempts in the nation. We urge the state to provide resources so schools can partner with local communities to implement comprehensive, culturally appropriate school-based mental health programs that foster the health and development of students.

ACSA supports funding to enable schools to recruit, retain and increase their access to school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, nurses and mental health specialists. Increased professional learning opportunities for school leaders and other school staff in planning and implementing interventions for students experiencing childhood trauma and other mental health challenges is also needed. ACSA supports increased SEL training, funding and/or personnel to increase SEL in our schools.

Health Care Costs

We encourage solutions to the escalating costs of health insurance in the state. We support exploration of various mechanisms to decrease health care costs by such measures as: allowing employers to purchase health insurance policies across state lines, appropriate controls of the cost of medivacs, and promotion of pro-wellness lifestyles and proactive health care options.

2020 JPS Federal Issues

Forest Receipts (Safe and Secure Rural Schools Act)

ACSA strongly endorses the continuation of the 100-plus year partnership that was created between the federal government and communities to compensate communities financially impacted by the placement of timber reserves into federal ownership. ACSA supports a long-term solution.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

ACSA encourages the United States Department of Education to continue to fulfill the bipartisan intention of ESSA by honoring local control.

Further, we encourage Congress to eliminate discretionary funding caps, to allow adequate investment in education, including full funding of the education programs authorized by the bipartisan Every School Succeeds Act.

Affordable Care Act

ACSA supports repeal or modifications to the Affordable Care Act (ACA) “Cadillac Tax” and how it applies to Alaska. The current calculation, due to begin in 2022, would unfairly penalize Alaskan employers for factors beyond their control. Solutions may include a geographic differential or other mechanism to recognize Alaska’s unique cost structure.

Other Federal Issues

- We strongly oppose the use of public money to fund private/religious education through vouchers or other mechanisms.
- We support full funding with cost of living increases of E-Rate, Indian Education, Impact Aid, and all Title programs with no significant program changes.
- We support funding for social emotional learning, social workers, mental health support, and 0-5 learning for all.
- We encourage increased financial support and focus on school safety issues but do not support arming school personnel. We do support hiring additional safety officers.

Other State Issues

- Capital Improvement (CIP) Funding must be restored. Long-term fiscal planning is needed to maintain and protect infrastructure.
- ACSA supports and expects the State of Alaska to fully utilize matching federal grant monies such as those required for Head Start and other early learning programs.
- The state should continue efforts to control the cost of workers' compensation claims, including adoption of medical treatment guidelines, improved management of claims, and an improved reemployment benefits process.
- ACSA supports a non-partisan and independent State Board of Education whose sole purpose is ensuring a quality education for all of Alaska's children.
- ACSA supports the local control and autonomy of Alaska's communities who are served through all 54 unique school districts.
- ACSA is proud and supportive of educational alternative programs, so long as the directive in Alaska's Constitution is upheld: **"No money shall be paid from public funds for the direct benefit of any religious or other private educational institution."** This restriction includes vouchers and/or any other mechanisms. Our funding system must be transparent, inclusive and collaborative.



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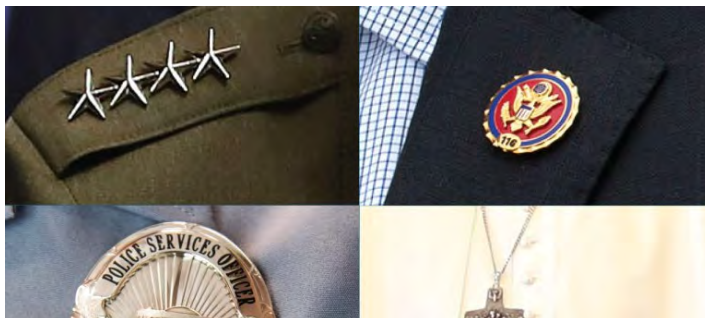


Why Americans Don't Fully Trust Many Who Hold Positions of Power and Responsibility

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6 mins read

Members of Congress and technology leaders are rated lower in empathy, transparency and ethics; public gives higher scores to military leaders, public school principals and police officers

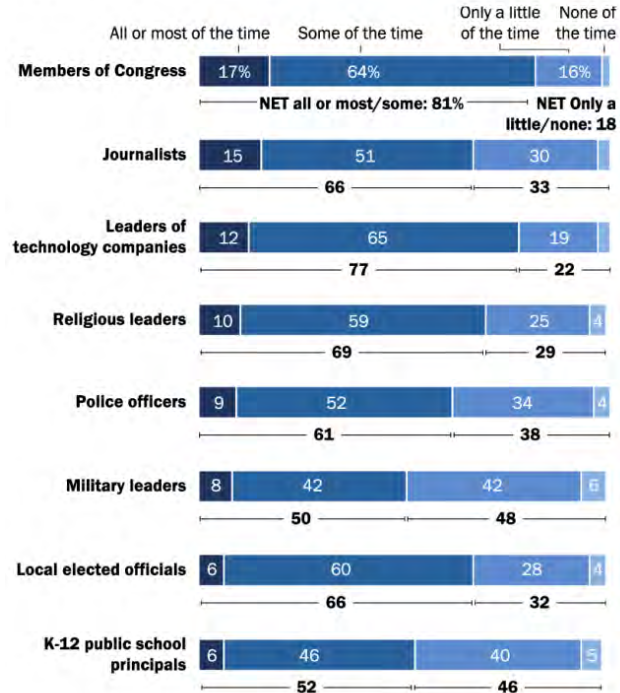




(Photos, clockwise, by Win McNamee, Stefani Reynolds, Vatican Pool-Corbis and Paul Bersebach/MediaNews Group/Orange County Register, all via Getty Images)

Most think key institutional actors behave unethically at least a little of the time

% of U.S. adults who think _____ act unethically

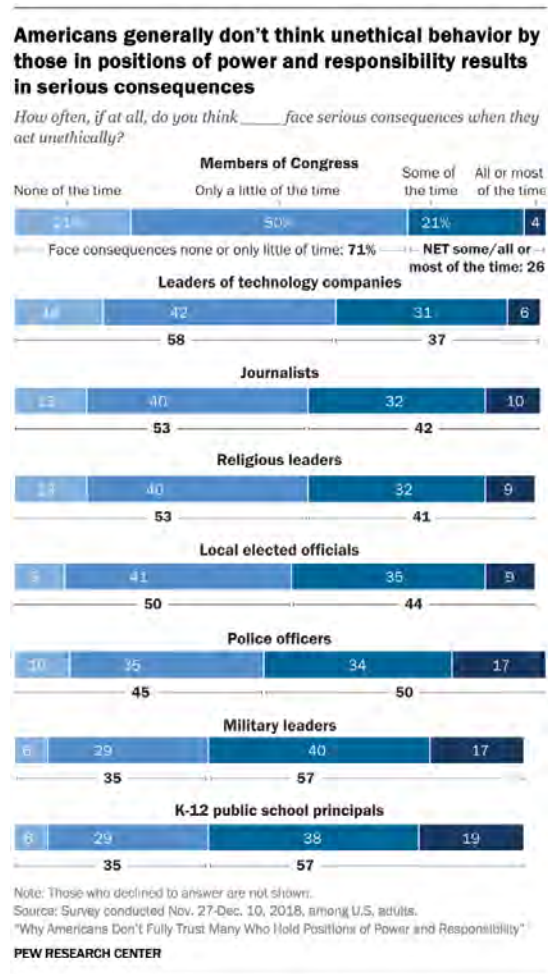


Note: Those who declined to answer are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted Nov. 27-Dec. 10, 2018, among U.S. adults.
"Why Americans Don't Fully Trust Many Who Hold Positions of Power and Responsibility"
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

People invest their trust in institutions and those who have power for a variety of reasons. Researchers have found that people's confidence in others and organizations can include their judgments about the [competence, honesty and benevolence](#) of the organizations or individuals they are assessing, as well as factors such as [empathy, openness, integrity](#) and [accountability](#). These perceptions can be seen as building blocks of trust.

Taking account of those insights, a new Pew Research Center survey finds that people offer different judgments about these building blocks of trust when it comes to eight groups of people who hold posi-

tions of power and responsibility in America: members of Congress, local elected officials, K-12 public school principals, journalists, military leaders, police officers, leaders of technology companies and religious leaders.



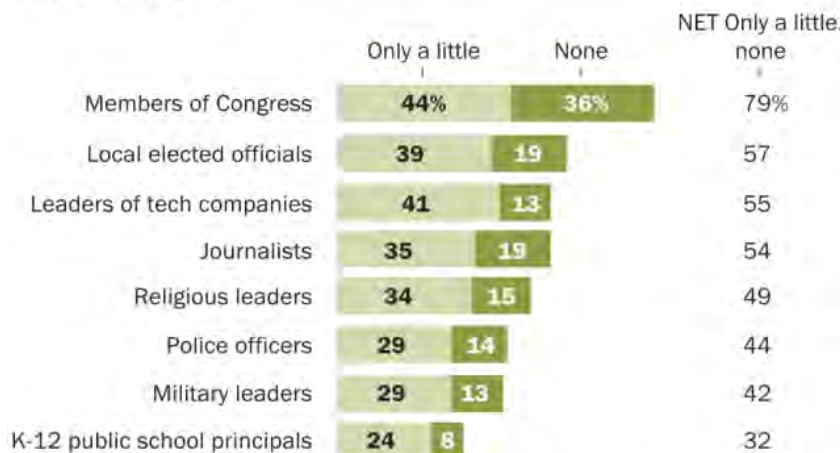
Notable shares of the public give people in these powerful jobs low ratings when it comes to behaving ethically, dealing with ethical problems in their ranks and admitting mistakes. Half or more of Americans think these influential people act *unethically* at least some of the time, ranging from 50% who believe this about military leaders to 81% who feel members of Congress act unethically “some,” or “all or most of the time.” Additionally, 77% believe this about the leaders of technology companies and 69% think this about religious leaders.

At the same time, a third or more of Americans think that unethical behavior is treated relatively lightly – that is to say, wrongdoers face serious consequences only a little of the time or less often. Indeed,

majorities believe that members of Congress (79%), local elected officials (57%), leaders of technology companies (55%) and journalists (54%) admit mistakes and take responsibility for them only a little of the time or none of the time. Some 49% say the same of religious leaders.

Many believe members of Congress do not often admit mistakes or take responsibility for them

% of U.S. adults who say ____ admit mistakes, take responsibility only a little or none of the time



Source: Survey conducted Nov. 27-Dec. 10, 2018, among U.S. adults.

"Why Americans Don't Fully Trust Many Who Hold Positions of Power and Responsibility"

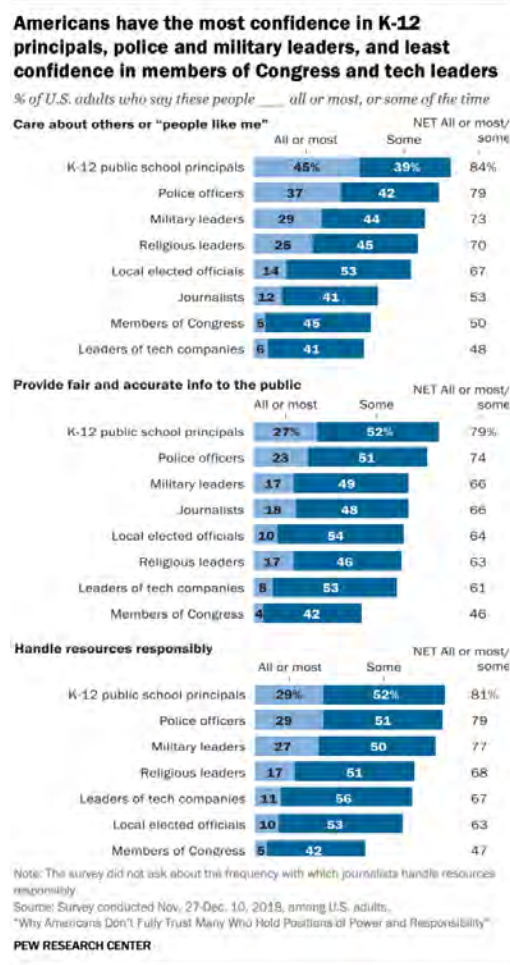
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

These views emerge in a survey that covered several dimensions of public confidence in those who hold these positions of power and responsibility. The questions probed public views about several essential aspects of public confidence – such as whether these groups care about people, handle resources responsibly or provide accurate information to the public. Survey respondents were asked to choose whether the group members act in these ways “all or most of the time,” “some of the time,” “only a little of the time” or “none of the time.”

The survey shows that beyond the realms of ethics and transparency, Americans have varying levels of confidence in key aspects of job performance by those who hold important positions of power and responsibility. For instance, U.S. adults have relatively high levels of confidence that these people will perform key aspects of their duties

(for example, that leaders of technology companies build products and services that enhance people’s lives) “some of the time” or more often, and that they will handle resources responsibly.

Generally, the public has the most confidence in the way K-12 public school principals, military leaders and police officers operate when it comes to caring about people, providing fair and accurate information to the public and handling resources responsibly. Some 84% think principals care about the students they serve “some of the time” or “all or most of the time,” 79% think police officers care about them at that level of frequency, and 73% have the same level of confidence in military leaders. The public places somewhat lower – but still relatively high – levels of confidence in religious leaders, journalists and local elected officials. The public places somewhat lower – but still relatively high – levels of confidence in religious leaders, journalists and local elected officials.

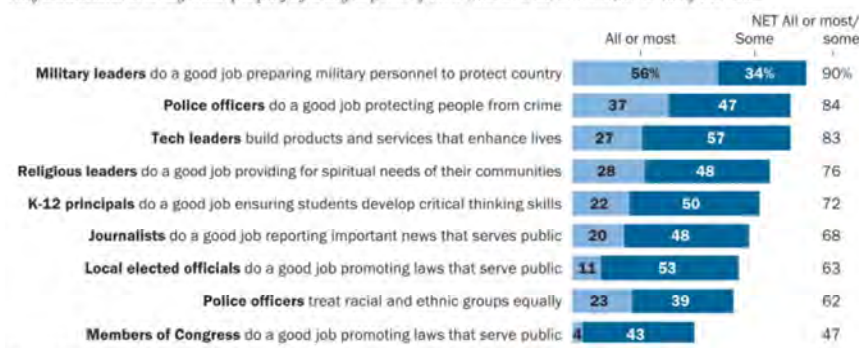


Members of Congress and leaders of technology companies do not have the same level of public confidence when it comes to several performance attributes. For instance, 48% of adults think tech firm bosses care about people “all or most of the time” or “some of the time,” and 50% feel that way about members of Congress. Similarly, 46% think members of Congress provide fair and accurate information that often, and 61% think this about leaders of tech firms. Some 47% think members of Congress handle resources responsibly at least some of the time.

When queried about their views related to specific aspects of each group’s mission, the public gives relatively good marks to all of these actors, with military leaders ranking the highest and members of Congress the lowest. For instance, 90% of adults believe military leaders do a good job preparing military personnel to protect the country “all or most of the time” or “some of the time,” 83% think technology company leaders build products and services that enhance lives, and 63% think local elected officials do a good job promoting laws that serve the public.

Public sees military and tech leaders doing key parts of their jobs well and gives a mixed verdict on police officers

% of U.S. adults who say these people fulfill key aspects of their missions all or most, or some of the time



Source: Survey conducted Nov. 27-Dec. 10, 2018, among U.S. adults.

"Why Americans Don't Fully Trust Many Who Hold Positions of Power and Responsibility"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

The survey posed two questions about the performance of police officers and people had somewhat varying views: 84% say police do a good job protecting people from crime “all or most of the time” or “some of the time.” A smaller share (62%) say police officers do a

good job treating racial and ethnic groups equally at least some of the time.

These readings about those who have power and responsibility were gathered in four different segments of a survey of 10,618 U.S. adults conducted Nov. 27 to Dec. 10, 2018, using the Center's nationally representative [American Trends Panel](#). Panelists were randomly assigned to one of the four segments, and each segment focused on questions about two of the eight categories of people in positions of power and responsibility covered in this report. The margin of sampling error for the smallest of the four samples is plus or minus 3.0 percentage points.

The groups of those who have power and responsibility were chosen because they play key roles in American society and have important effects on the day-to-day lives of Americans. This research is part of the Center's extensive and ongoing focus on issues tied to [trust, facts and democracy](#), and the interplay among them. It is closely aligned with the Center's recent exploration of the public's nuanced views about trust in [scientific experts](#).

Views of those who hold positions of power and responsibility are linked to political party, race and gender

Here are some other key findings related to partisanship and demographic differences about the performance of these eight major groups of those who have power and responsibility in various institutions:

Partisan differences: Republicans and independents who lean toward the Republican Party are less likely than Democrats and Democratic leaners to believe journalists perform key parts of their jobs “all or most of the time” or “some of the time.” For instance, three-in-ten Republicans and Republican leaners (31%) believe journalists fairly cover all sides of an issue at least some of the time, while about three-quarters of Democrats and those who lean toward the Demo-

cratic party (74%) say the same – a 43-percentage-point difference in opinion between the two groups.

Democrats and those who lean Democratic are more likely than their Republican counterparts to think K-12 public school principals consistently perform key aspects of their jobs. For instance, Democrats and leaners are more likely than Republicans and their leaners to believe that principals handle resources in a responsible way (87% vs. 76%) and to think that principals do a good job ensuring that students are developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills (76% vs. 68%).

The partisan gaps apply to people's judgments about military leaders, with Republicans being more positive than Democrats. For example, Republicans are 20 points more likely than Democrats to say military leaders handle the resources available in a responsible way some of the time or more often (89% vs. 69%).

In addition, Republicans and those who lean toward the Republican Party are more likely than Democrats and those who lean toward the Democratic Party to express positive opinions about religious leaders. For instance, fully three-quarters of Republicans say religious leaders provide fair and accurate information to the public at least some of time, compared with just 54% of Democrats who say the same.

Racial and ethnic differences: Black Americans and Hispanics are more skeptical than white people about the performance of police officers. Roughly seven-in-ten white Americans (72%) say police officers treat racial and ethnic groups equally at least some of the time. In comparison, half of Hispanics and just 33% of black adults say the same.

Black people are also less likely than white Americans to believe that local officials do their jobs well at least some of the time.

Gender differences: Women are more likely than men to have confidence in members of Congress and journalists doing their jobs much of the time.



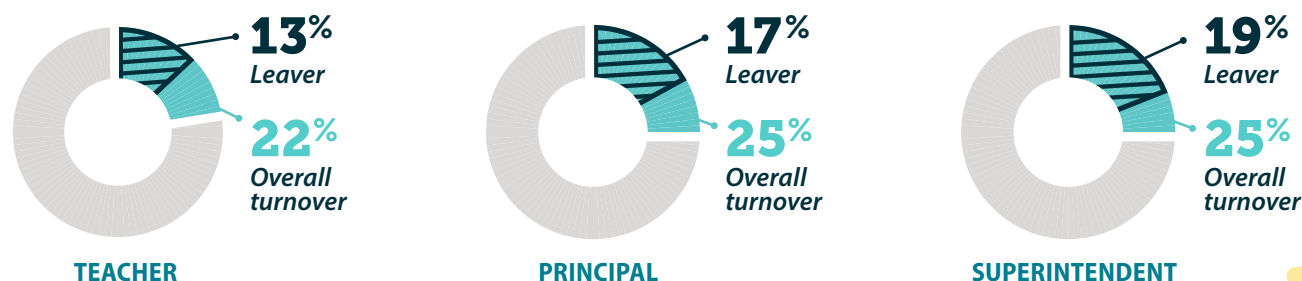
Educator Retention and Turnover in Alaska

Like many other states, Alaska is finding it difficult to retain educators. Turnover—defined as not returning to a position or school in a given year—among Alaska educators is higher in rural areas and among educators not prepared in the state. Alaska’s struggle to retain educators is concerning because educator turnover at the teacher, principal, or superintendent level is associated with negative student outcomes.¹

Most of Alaska’s turnover was educators leaving Alaska or the profession

Statewide turnover rates from 2012/13 to 2017/18 remained steady for teachers but varied for principals and superintendents.² Nearly 60 percent of teacher turnover involved “leavers”—individuals who left Alaska or remained in the state but were no longer educators. For example, in 2017/18, 13 percent of teachers left the profession or their position, while 9 percent of teachers went to a new district or school but remained in the Alaska public school system.

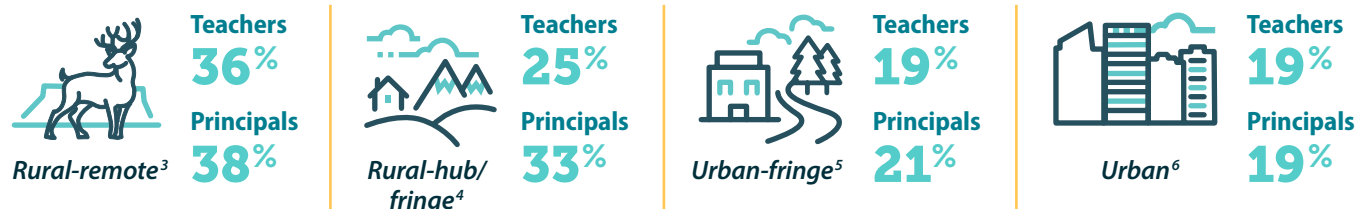
Turnover rates in Alaska for 2017/18



Rural schools and students are hardest hit by turnover

Rural schools have much higher teacher and principal turnover than urban or urban-fringe schools, with 64 percent of rural-remote teachers who turn over leaving the state or the profession.

Average annual turnover rates for 2012/13 to 2017/18



Teachers and principals who were prepared outside Alaska were more likely to turn over the following year

Teachers and principals prepared outside of Alaska had higher turnover rates compared to teachers and principals prepared in Alaska.

Average annual turnover rates for 2012/13 to 2017/18



Potential recruitment and retention strategies based on feedback from district leaders



Recruit continuously for retention



Build trust between administrators and teachers



Recreate familiar living conditions



Support teacher growth



Treat teachers like the leaders they are



Make up for pay that is not competitive



Find pockets of cross-district collaboration in a competitive environment



OVERALL CONSIDERATIONS

Drawing on findings from the full report, education leaders and policymakers may want to consider:

- Increasing the supply of Alaska-educated teachers and principals.
- Improving working conditions for teachers and principals, especially in rural schools.
- Equipping principals to better support teachers.

Notes

¹ Coelli & Green, 2012; Gibbons, Scrutinio, & Telhaj, 2018; Henry, Bastian, & Fortner, 2011; Miller, 2013; Parker-Chenaille, 2012; Snodgrass Rangel, 2018; Waters & Marzano, 2006. Please see the full report for references.

² Superintendent turnover rates were only available from 2013/14 to 2017/18.

³ Rural-remote refers to schools located in small communities in off-road areas that are accessible only by small plane and/or by boat, such as the Pribilof Islands.

⁴ Rural-hub/fringe refers to rural-hub communities, such as Bethel, that may be off road, as well as rural-fringe communities, such as Healy, that are on the road system.

⁵ Urban-fringe refers to on- and off-road communities either near an urban locale or with commercial air access, such as Palmer and Sitka.

⁶ Urban refers to larger cities such as Anchorage, Juneau, or Fairbanks.

Read the report: Vazquez Cano, M., Bel Hadj Amor, H., & Pierson, A. (2019). *Educator retention and turnover under the midnight sun: Examining trends and relationships in teacher, principal, and superintendent movement in Alaska*. Portland, OR: Education Northwest, Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest. <https://eric.ed.gov/?q=ED598351>

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Educator Retention and Turnover under the Midnight Sun: Examining Trends and Relationships in Teacher, Principal, and Superintendent Movement in Alaska

Vazquez Cano, Manuel; Bel Hadj Amor, Hella; Pierson, Ashley

Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest

This study examines trends in educator turnover and retention, and the relationships of those trends to educator and school characteristics, during a six-year period (2012/13 to 2017/18, with 2011/12 as the base year) in Alaska. Turnover refers to educators leaving their positions, while retention refers to educators staying in their positions at schools and districts. The study also summarizes the retention strategies used by eight school districts from across the state. Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Northwest conducted this study in response to a request from a group of school superintendents who are members of the Alaska State Policy Research Alliance, a REL Northwest partnership. The alliance brings together policymakers and education stakeholders, including the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, the Alaska Superintendents Association, and the University of Alaska, to use research and evidence to inform state and local education policy. These stakeholders were seeking a more in-depth understanding of educator turnover and retention patterns in Alaska to inform the development and prioritization of recruitment and retention strategies by state and district policymakers. To address the stakeholders' request, the study team explored the following research questions: (1) What were the teacher, principal, and superintendent (educator) turnover rates by year in Alaska during the 2012/13 to 2017/18 school years? (2) What community, school, educator, and student characteristics are associated with educator turnover? and (3) What is the relationship between superintendent and principal turnover and teacher turnover? Key findings: (1) From 2012/13 to 2017/18, statewide turnover rates for teachers remained steady at around 22 percent. Rates for principals varied from 23 to 33 percent. Rates for superintendents fluctuated from 19 to 40 percent. Most of the teachers, principals, and superintendents who turned over were leavers, meaning they left the state or remained in the state but were no longer educators; (2) Turnover rates were higher in rural areas than in urban areas, with the highest rates in more remote schools; (3)

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Many teachers who changed districts moved from one rural school to another rural school; (4) Teachers and principals who were prepared outside Alaska and teachers who were in their first year in either their school or the Alaska K-12 school system were more likely to turn over the following year; (5) Lower salaries, holding more than one position, and teaching at more than one school site were related to increased teacher turnover; (6) High-poverty, high-diversity, and smaller schools were more likely to experience teacher turnover; and (7) Principal and teacher turnover were linked: Schools that experienced principal turnover also had high teacher turnover. We found no evidence that superintendent turnover was related to teacher or principal turnover. Implications: This study suggests that state and local policymakers may want to consider increasing the supply of Alaska-educated teachers; improving teacher working conditions, especially in rural schools; and equipping principals to better support teachers and leverage their input to improve educator retention. The implications of this study may also apply to rural districts and other communities that have many non-local educators.

Descriptors: [Labor Turnover](#), [Teacher Persistence](#), [Faculty Mobility](#), [Teacher Characteristics](#), [Institutional Characteristics](#), [Principals](#), [Superintendents](#), [Student Characteristics](#), [Rural Urban Differences](#), [School Districts](#), [Salaries](#), [Poverty](#), [Diversity](#), [School Size](#), [Barriers](#), [Teacher Responsibility](#), [Correlation](#)

Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest. Available from: Institute of Education Sciences. 555 New Jersey Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20208. Tel: 800-872-5327; Web site: <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northwest/index.asp>

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PRINCIPAL TURNOVER

INSIGHTS FROM CURRENT PRINCIPALS



Stephanie Levin, MPP, PhD; Kathryn Bradley, MPP, MA; and Caitlin Scott, PhD

ABSTRACT

Studies show that school functioning and student achievement often suffer when effective principals leave their schools. Past research has identified five main reasons principals leave their jobs: inadequate preparation and professional development, poor working conditions, insufficient salaries, lack of decision-making authority, and ineffective accountability policies. This study draws on evidence from focus groups to better understand the challenges principals face and highlight strategies that can support principals and increase their retention. Focus group participants identified multiple strategies, including high-quality professional learning opportunities, support from strong administrative teams with adequate school-level resources, competitive salaries, appropriate decision-making authority, and evaluations characterized by timely and formative feedback.

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ABOUT THE NASSP–LPI PRINCIPAL TURNOVER RESEARCH SERIES

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and the Learning Policy Institute (LPI) are currently collaborating on an intensive, yearlong research project to identify the causes and consequences of principal turnover nationwide. The purpose is to increase awareness of this issue, and to identify and share evidence-based responses to help mitigate excessive turnover in the principal profession. This brief is the second in a series. The first, which presented findings from a literature review, covers the known scope of the principal turnover problem and provides a basis for understanding its mechanisms. It also suggests, based on past research, that district and school leaders and federal and state policymakers implement a number of strategies to increase principal retention: Offer effective and ongoing professional development; improve working conditions; provide fair, sufficient compensation; provide greater decision-making authority; and decrease counterproductive accountability practices. This brief builds on that knowledge with insights from focus groups of school leaders who shared their experiences and expertise on the challenges of the principalship, as well as strategies to address these challenges.

In addition to the literature review and focus groups, the yearlong research agenda includes analysis of both the U.S. Department of Education National Teacher and Principal Survey and a national principal survey that will delve deeply into the five focus areas that emerged from the initial research. Findings from the survey will increase the field's knowledge regarding principals' mobility decisions. Based on the research, LPI and NASSP will develop recommendations for policymakers at all levels of government to advance policies for states, districts, and schools to support and retain high-quality school leaders.

All the briefs in this series are available at www.nassp.org/turnover and www.learningpolicyinstitute.org/principal-turnover-nassp.

INTRODUCTION

School principals are essential for providing strong educational opportunities and improved outcomes for students. They can do this by enhancing teachers' practice, motivating school staff, and maintaining a positive school climate. Building these conditions takes time and requires continuity of strong leadership. Consequently, sudden or frequent turnover of effective principals can disrupt school progress, often resulting in higher teacher turnover and, ultimately, lower gains in student achievement.¹

Principal turnover is a serious issue across the country. A 2017 national survey of public school principals found that, overall, approximately 18 percent of principals had left their position since the year before. In high-poverty schools, the turnover rate was 21 percent.²

To increase understanding of principal turnover and determine which policies and practices might stem the tide, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and the Learning Policy Institute (LPI) have partnered to conduct a yearlong study of principal turnover. This effort began with a [review of the literature](#) to determine what is already known about the causes of turnover. LPI's literature review found five main reasons principals leave their jobs: inadequate preparation and professional development, poor working conditions, insufficient salaries, lack of decision-making authority, and ineffective accountability policies.

In the second phase of our research, LPI collected in-depth insights through focus groups with experts—namely, current administrators—who grapple with the everyday, long-term demands and challenges that mark the principalship. Focus groups consisted of 17 participants with diverse backgrounds, representing 15 states and serving in schools with poverty levels ranging from 4 percent to 78 percent. The LPI focus groups explored these same five aspects of principals' jobs. Notably, we found that focus group participants faced challenges similar to those identified in the literature review. In addition, based on feedback from these administrators, we identified several strategies that could give principals the supports they said they needed to succeed and remain in their schools:

- High-quality professional learning opportunities
- Support from strong administrative teams with adequate school-level resources
- Competitive salaries
- Appropriate decision-making authority within the school context
- Evaluations characterized by timely, formative feedback





PRINCIPALS' COMMITMENT TO LEADERSHIP FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

Principals' comments illustrated how their commitment to their schools motivates many to remain in their positions. Focus group participants voiced a strong dedication to their students and staff, and they described their desire to make a positive difference for students.

Principals spoke of their affection for the students and the pleasure it brings them to be in their world. One high school principal exclaimed, "My favorite thing about being a principal: I love those kids! They're like ... my children." Describing her students as "passionate and fun and energetic," a middle level principal said, "Every day kids bring joy ... and that keeps you going." Another middle level principal joked, "I am kind of a middle school kid myself, so that's the appropriate place for me."

Principals also discussed enjoying their role supporting teachers and staff so that they, in turn, can create "conditions for students to aspire to their highest aspirations." A principal commented, "[It's] a joy to work alongside the new faculty members as they grow professionally."

For many, the principalship is a calling. One principal explained that her vocation is aligned with her purpose; she asserted, "I believe in what I am doing. I am supposed to be here." Another principal in a school with a majority of first-generation college-bound students shared that her personal experiences and connection to her community called her to the principalship. Similarly, what seemed most moving for principals was their ability to impact students' lives. A middle level principal from the Midwest said, "[I] feel like I go home having made a difference every day." A high school principal from a struggling rural community shared, "I get to work with a lot of students who grew up under the same stars that I did and show them that there's hope and a way out of what they have been born into."

THE CHALLENGES PRINCIPALS FACE

While principals spoke passionately about their roles, they also acknowledged the complexity and daily demands of the principalship that often make their jobs quite challenging. Focus group participants cited poor working conditions, being undervalued for their work, having too little authority to make certain decisions for their schools, and accountability systems that do not support continuous growth.

WORKING CONDITIONS

Principals' working conditions can influence their sense of well-being and hinder their ability to accomplish all they hope to.

Principals face multiple and growing needs from students and parents. Principals spoke of their responsibilities to their students and communities and the stresses that can result. As one put it, being a principal is like having "a weight that you put on your back and you just carry all the time." Several said the stress of the job is heightened by the emotional burden of supporting students. Principals discussed how the needs of their students have grown over the years due to societal pressures. One principal explained, "Whatever seems to happen outside of the school community, meaning what's going on with our politics, our country, political agendas, ... seems to work its way into the high school." Principals also told difficult stories of dealing with their students' trauma, and one acknowledged that "the adults internalize a lot of that trauma":

I think one year we had five kids who lost someone in the city within a year, and they're not just like a name on a piece of paper. Those are our kids, and so you love them, and you connect with them, and you take on an emotional weight that's really hard to compartmentalize.

Effective principals typically build relationships with parents and families to engage them as integral partners in the school.³ However, several principals called out the need to address the expectations of parents as an added stress. A high school principal of a school serving students from high- and low-income backgrounds shared her experience:

I deal with the gamut. ... [T]he affluent parents, they want everything. ... They want blood from a stone and they're expecting you to do it. ... Then you have the other ones. ... They're more needy because they have to work three jobs and so forth and so on. They have high expectations for us as well, but they're looking for different things, different types of support.

Principals said their many obligations can require a huge time commitment, impeding their work-life balance and limiting what they can accomplish on the job. Principals discussed their long work hours. A number spoke of early mornings, some getting up as early as 2:30 a.m. to finish the paperwork that is impossible to get to during the day. A high school principal, seeming to speak for many focus group participants, explained: "It's not a 9-to-5 job. As soon as you wake up to the time you go to bed and even on weekends. Kids can report things anytime. You're on call all the time." As a result of their busy schedules, several principals described how having a balance between family and work is challenging and often requires personal sacrifices. One principal shared that in recent years the only times he and his wife have been out together were during school dances.

With their myriad responsibilities, school leaders said they struggled to find adequate time for their role as instructional leader. A middle level principal from a high-poverty school in the Pacific Northwest acknowledged that the time needed to deal with disciplinary issues, such as inappropriate social media use, meant less time

for instructional leadership. He explained, “Carving out the time to be in the classroom and really develop that relationship with the kids and the teachers has become more and more difficult.” Another middle level principal agreed, stating, “All of the other managerial things and the things that take you away [from being] able to get to spend time and develop those that you have in your building [are] more and more of the challenge.”

Insufficient resources make it difficult to create positive learning environments. A number of principals spoke of lacking the appropriate resources to serve their students and teachers. One principal explained what budget cuts meant for her school: “The amount of money ... has been cut 75 percent, and last year I had \$0 for textbooks.” She also called out the lack of local resources to support students, mentioning lack of mental health resources as an example: “Kids are coming to school with more and more challenges associated with mental health, and there’s nowhere to refer them. You can send them to the hospital for an evaluation; they’re back to school the next day.”

For many, the lack of funding meant that principals spent time advocating for resources from their districts. For some, this was “a full-time job.” A high school principal from a mid-Atlantic state spoke of the time she spent dealing with infrastructure issues that affected the entire school community: “Our fields are kind of falling apart. ... [T]hat’s a real struggle. There are endless phone calls about the fields and the air conditioning and the heating and the pipe that collapses.”

COMPENSATION

Focus group participants agreed that compensation levels are rarely commensurate with the time, effort, and skills required of school leaders.

Principal salaries do not fully compensate principals for the time and effort they must spend to do their jobs well. All focus group participants reported that principal salaries are generally inadequate, given the expectations for the role. One middle level principal explained, “You have to be like a CEO of a small company.” She described being “responsible for a

thousand people’s children” while “multiple people who don’t have the responsibility make more money than you do.” Other principals pointed out that, although the salary may seem reasonable, if you break it down as an hourly payment, the compensation is actually quite low. A high school principal from Ohio explained: “No one wants to do the math. If you do the [math], the highest-paid teachers in my building make more each day than I do.”

In schools with higher concentrations of students in poverty and fewer resources to serve high-need students, the demand on school leaders can be much greater. One high school principal explained: “[My] district struggles to attract [principals] to begin with. They don’t pay. It’s difficult. I mean they pay, but not to work at a high-needs, high-poverty, inner-city school.”

Teacher salaries can be higher than principal salaries, disincentivizing teachers from becoming principals and principals from remaining in their jobs. Focus group participants said that dissatisfaction with salary is further exacerbated by the fact that, in some contexts, principals’ salaries can be lower than salaries of experienced teachers, despite principals’ additional responsibilities and time commitment. A high school principal spoke of his school district, saying, “[T]he teacher can make more money than the [principal] with a lot less responsibility and the summer off.”

A Northwestern state provides an example of high teacher salaries relative to principal salaries: A recent court action to address an underfunded K-12 school system led to considerably increased teacher salaries. However, principal salaries were stagnant. A principal from this state described the impact: “Now we’ve got teachers making more money than the principals on less time. They’re [employed] only seven months a year, and some principals are looking at that and going, ... ‘I don’t need this crap. ... I’ll just go back to the classroom.’”

The implications are far-reaching. This principal looked up the numbers of open principal and assistant principal positions and found “probably the largest number [of vacancies] I’ve ever seen at this point in the school year already in [our] state.”

DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITY

Principals must make and guide many decisions and processes to ensure success in the complex organization they manage in ways that take into account the contexts in which they work.

Lack of decision-making authority can frustrate principals working to serve the needs of their students and school communities. Principals participating in focus groups were deeply committed to their roles as leaders and discussed feeling responsible for their schools' destinies. However, many were frustrated by the constraints that limited their ability to make decisions. A middle level principal described himself as being like a manager of a franchise:

You take it from every angle, and you have some decision-making power in terms of which direction your school goes, ... but there's so much that gets cast down from above that you don't have a say in—where you're kind of the used car salesman, you have to sell it to your staff and make them think it's a great idea even if you don't agree with it.

Others recounted similar stories in which their decisions were overridden by a district's central office or the local school board. One principal commented: "There's certain initiatives. ... You're going to spend hundreds and thousands of dollars for an IB [International Baccalaureate] program. I would definitely want a social worker instead of that. There's some things that you have to do that are not aligned with what you want to do." Beyond district governance, principals spoke of state and federal policies and mandates influencing issues related to allocation of funds, personnel, and curriculum.



ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability systems can add to the stress many principals face from long work hours, the breadth of roles and responsibilities, and familial responsibilities. Ineffective accountability systems can add extra tasks to principals' to-do lists and, in some cases, provoke leaders to leave their positions.

Some accountability systems do not accurately measure the quality of schools and leaders. The majority of principals participating in focus groups reported that their districts' accountability systems were ineffective. Many pointed to the evaluation process as nothing more than a compliance exercise. A high school principal from a suburban community in the Southeast complained: "They're not even asking us for the evidence. I'd be more than happy to provide evidence of instructional leadership, management, hiring."

Principals from both high- and low-poverty schools questioned the validity of accountability systems that rely on student assessments that do not reflect student growth. One middle level principal explained:

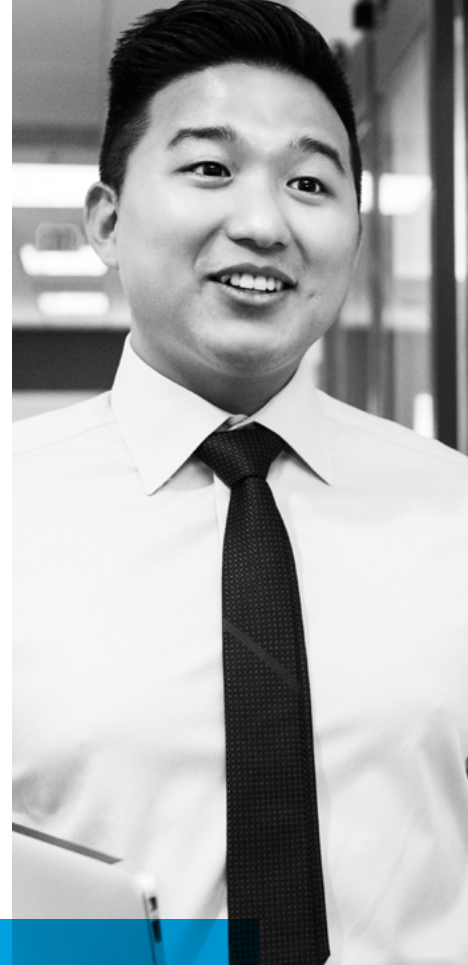
Schools are demoralized by how [they are] assessed and the way that people who've never set foot in a school judge us and slam us. ... [There are] amazing teachers working at some really challenging places, and people think that the schools are failing because the kids aren't doing well on these standardized tests, but really these teachers are growing these kids and doing so many more things. That's hard.

Other principals pointed out that accountability systems can be misleading when assessments leave no room to demonstrate student improvement or do not account for students who opt out of testing.

Another concern expressed by several principals was that accountability systems can rely on evaluators who are ill prepared for the role. A middle level principal explained:

I think the system is only as good as the person using it. ... You can put a 16-year-old in a Ferrari and they're going to wreck it just the same as they would a Ford Escort. ... I've had [ineffective] evaluators that've done [my evaluation] at 4:00 p.m. the last day of my contract. ... I've had others that take a real diligent stance on it and give constructive feedback and try to grow you. So, it's not so much about the system as it is the person working that system.

Principal evaluations are not always designed to help principals improve their practice. Many focus group participants emphasized that their states' and districts' accountability systems are not helpful to their development as school leaders. One principal commented that, because his evaluation is not useful, he relies on self-reflection to improve as a leader. Other principals shared experiences in which they wrote their own evaluations on behalf of their evaluators, setting their own goals or comparing their efforts to expectations based on state standards.

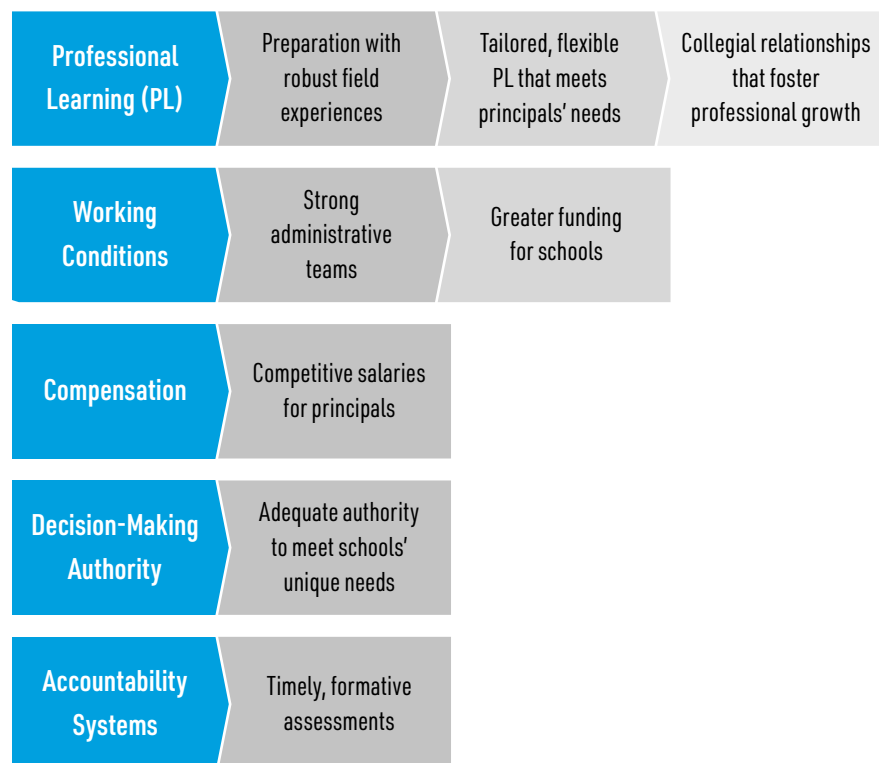




SUPPORTIVE STRATEGIES FROM FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

As principals discussed challenges, they also highlighted some remedies that help them better serve their schools and stay in the profession.

FIGURE 1: SUPPORTIVE STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES PRINCIPALS FACE



Data source: Summary of supportive strategies described in focus groups with select principals who are members of the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

To engage successfully in the work of school leadership, principals need an enormous range of knowledge and skills. Continuous learning is required to meet this need.

Principals praised preparation programs that offer robust field experiences with strong mentors and/or internships. A number of principals spoke positively about their preparation programs, specifically calling out robust field experiences that offered comprehensive support from strong mentors



and/or internships. For example, a high school principal from an urban community in the Southeast described her preparation program:

I had a wonderful program and a wonderful experience. I had to do my internship for a solid year, and I think I was very fortunate to find the principal mentor that I did, and I think that's half the battle. Don't choose the school; choose the principal so that you can truly, truly learn from [someone] who's going to push you out there and get you the experience you need, somebody that you can build a relationship [with], who's willing to throw responsibility over to you.

Another high school principal from the Pacific Northwest called his mentor "priceless."

A few principals described successful district-run programs. These programs also featured strong mentors and internships. For example, a district in the Southeast had developed an Aspiring Principals Residency Academy for individuals seeking to be school leaders. This internship program includes a yearlong residency program. The principal describing this program explained that participants retain their assistant principal roles and remain in their buildings. At the same time, however, program participants devote one day each week to "professional learning, and they have a mentor that develops and creates situations and opportunities ... to engage in actual legitimate professional practice as a principal."

School leaders spoke highly of tailored professional development that provides flexibility to accommodate difficult schedules and meets the needs identified by principals. A number of principals expressed their appreciation for professional development opportunities that fit their schedules and budgets. Other principals suggested that professional development would be more valuable if it helped them address the specific

needs and contexts of their schools. A middle level principal from a Mid-Atlantic state praised her district for meeting these requirements:

I think my district does a pretty good job. We have an office of continuing professional development that offers courses that anyone can take: teachers, higher educators, administrators. We have monthly principals' meetings and quarterly curricular meetings that are a half day that I think are pretty decent. There is also money for administrators that we can apply for. There is \$600 allotted for every administrator, and also we each get reimbursed, and then after November 1 whatever is left [in the budget]—this can add [up] to \$3,000."

Some principals also praised districts that give leaders the option to participate in externally provided professional learning. The same middle level principal was able to select her own professional development program. She spoke enthusiastically of online self-paced courses offered at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology that both satisfied professional development hour requirements and aligned with her professional needs.

Similarly, one principal said his state supports all its principals with professional development as part of their contract. In fact, the state requires principals to be recertified. The principal explained, "There is an incentive for you to take advantage of professional development because if you don't, you'll lose your certificate."

Formal and informal relationships with colleagues were said to be invaluable for professional growth and support. Many principals expressed deep gratitude for their mentors and colleagues who guided and supported them through new experiences and difficult times. They shared the understanding that these relationships are essential to their professional growth and longevity in the principalship. According to one principal:

It's a lonely, lonely job, especially when things are not going well or something's happening. You are the point person. ... Phone a friend: You have got to have the ability to have a trusted mentor or someone else that's across town or in another town that you can call, that can just understand the shoes that you're walking in.



Connections with colleagues varied based on principals' paths and contexts. For example, a number of principals recounted maintaining relationships with their early mentors. A novice principal chronicled her relationships with various mentors, stating, "In the last three years, I probably would have been undone were it not for the people who walked through it with me and gave perspective."

A high school principal from New England explained that her state association connects first-year principals with other principals from around the state. The fact that her mentor was out of her district allowed for "a better level of trust." She said, "That person has been long retired, and I am still in touch with him on a daily basis."

While many principals spoke of individual colleagues or mentors they reached out to for support, a few principals stressed the need for organized networks. As two principals respectively described their professional learning communities:

We have a [principal] group that I manage, 16 area high schools, and we meet monthly, and just that networking with other schools where you share best practices. A lot of the sessions are therapy or commiseration sessions, like, "Wow, you've got it really bad," and that makes you feel better about your own school. But we plan it, we organize it, we bring in the speakers, we have a book study, etc. ... Our district gives us the green light for that, which is nice. ... As you network with other folks, it's powerful.

I put together a group of principals myself from neighboring towns that came about totally organically. I called three people to ask them about scheduling or some policy or practice or something. And we put together a group that four years later still meets every other month with an agenda. ... That's been my best professional development.

WORKING CONDITIONS

Principals spoke of the importance of supportive working conditions both for their personal well-being and for maintaining a positive and productive school culture.

A strong administrative team could help balance work and life responsibilities.

Focus group discussions indicated that having a strong support system in place can make the principalship much more manageable. A middle level principal who wanted to ensure family time described support she received from a strong assistant principal:

She and I became like family, and then we fiercely protect that for each other. ... We agreed from very early on: ... "[Y]ou will not miss going to one of your son's games because I will cover you. I will not miss a play or something at my kids' preschool because you've got me."

Providing and equitably allocating funds could help ensure that schools are positive learning environments for all students and educators.

All principals called on states to provide the necessary dollars for high-functioning schools. While waiting for that to happen, some principals implemented remedies to deal with inadequate funds. For example, a middle level principal serving students from low-income families built community partnerships, saying:

We have to be very creative and very different. ... We're very creative in partnering with the local children's board of the local government. We work a lot with the school system to build partnerships that actually meet [our] needs. [Also, we] signed up to have summer school and [we] run camps or programs free for our kids over the summer to actually get them what they need.

Another high school principal from a struggling rural community partnered with U.S. Cellular to put Wi-Fi (hotspots) on school buses. Then he used funds from a 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant to cover the expense of having an aide on a bus to help students with their homework. He said, “We put them on every bus that travels more than an hour.” These examples illustrate not only principals’ expressed needs for more adequate funding, but also principals’ resourcefulness in how to use additional funds effectively.

COMPENSATION

Competitive salaries that are aligned with principals’ vast responsibilities and multiple roles could help attract and retain school leaders. A number of principals noted that competitive salaries could attract and retain principals. A high school principal spoke of his appreciation for being in a district that, although serving a high proportion of students in poverty, had the resources to provide a good salary for the principalship. He said, “I wouldn’t go anywhere else in my state because I’d take a massive pay cut if I did, but [my district has] done a good job in making sure that their salaries are competitive.”

DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITY

Principals with greater decision-making authority could better implement policies and deploy resources based on their understanding of their schools’ needs. A few principals who had greater authority over personnel issues such as staffing and teachers’ professional development explained how they used their power to serve their schools. They made decisions that helped actualize district policies and targeted staff expertise and resources to their schools’ unique contexts. A middle level principal from a Southeastern suburb spoke about how she determined the professional learning plan for her teachers based on her school’s greatest need. She shared:

There are [district-determined] areas that our [professional learning] plan has to fall under, but within my building I can determine the professional learning I can work on. We’re doing a lot of work with equity, diversity, and shifting of culture.



ACCOUNTABILITY

Timely, formative evaluations could help principals set meaningful goals and improve their leadership.

Although the majority of principals said their evaluations did not inform their practice, a few spoke highly of certain facets of their accountability systems or offered suggestions to improve the ineffective systems through goal setting and timely, formative feedback.

In an example of the power of goal setting, a middle level principal described the positive experience of setting her own goals aligned to the needs of her students. One goal was to address the disproportionate discipline in her school. Sharing this goal with the teachers and administrators in her building resulted in fairer discipline practices that were enforced more equitably.

Advocating for timely, meaningful feedback, a high school principal from the Southeast suggested that systems include ongoing, real-time feedback, along

with opportunities to change practice. He explained, "Consistent feedback in a timely way with a leader has the potential to provide the most opportunity to move the needle." Another high school principal from the Mid-Atlantic added, "I would be glad to have feedback right after something [happens]. I'll take it there, but I don't want it to work against me."

To increase formative feedback, another principal suggested that teachers be included in the evaluation process: "If we did it right, teachers will be doing a lot of that feedback, [answering the questions:] How's their [principal's] communication? Are they trustable? Are they cool under fire? Are they fair?"

Principals in our focus groups clearly valued accountability systems aimed at continuous improvement rather than checking boxes on forms. Their suggestions for timely, formative evaluations could support principal retention, as well as professional growth and overall school improvement.



CONCLUSION

Principals are uniquely positioned to offer insights into why school leaders might leave their schools for more comfortable and rewarding environments—or abandon the profession altogether. Those we spoke with shared their expertise and helped us better understand the demands and challenges they face every day. Their concerns were consistent with what we learned from a review of the literature across five areas: access to high-quality professional learning opportunities, working conditions, compensation, decision-making authority, and accountability policies.

At the same time, our discussions with principals offered thoughtful solutions to address the challenges of the role:

- High-quality professional learning opportunities
- Support from strong administrative teams with adequate school-level resources
- Competitive salaries
- Appropriate decision-making authority within the school context
- Evaluations characterized by timely, formative feedback

These five remedies are grounded in the realities of schools and principals' experiences, offering useful insights for district, state, and federal policy to reduce the turnover of effective principals.

ENDNOTES

¹ Levin, S., & Bradley, K. (2019). *Understanding and addressing principal turnover: A review of the research*. Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals.

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³ Garbacz, S. A., Hermon, K. C., Thompson, A. M., & Reinke, W. M. (2017). Family engagement in education and intervention: Implementation and evaluation to maximize family, school, and student outcomes. *Journal of School Psychology*, 62, 1–10.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) is the leading organization of and voice for principals and other school leaders across the United States. NASSP seeks to transform education through school leadership, recognizing that the fulfillment of each student's potential relies on great leaders in every school committed to the success of each student. Reflecting its long-standing commitment to student leadership development, NASSP administers the National Honor Society, National Junior Honor Society, National Elementary Honor Society, and National Student Council.

The NASSP Policy & Advocacy Center is a trusted resource and online hub for legislative news, policy information, data, research, and advocacy tools related to K-12 education and additional school leaders' interests. It elevates the influence of school leaders by providing ways for them to directly communicate with policymakers at all levels of government. It is also a space to learn about important education issues affecting schools, and serves as a portal through which stakeholders and constituents can take action.

ABOUT THE LEARNING POLICY INSTITUTE

The Learning Policy Institute conducts and communicates independent, high-quality research to improve education policy and practice. Working with policymakers, researchers, educators, community groups, and others, the Institute seeks to advance evidence-based policies that support empowering and equitable learning for each and every child. Nonprofit and nonpartisan, the Institute connects policymakers and stakeholders at the local, state, and federal levels with the evidence, ideas, and actions needed to strengthen the education system from preschool through college and career readiness.



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UNDERSTANDING AND ADDRESSING

PRINCIPAL TURNOVER



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Principals are vital for ensuring student success. Their actions help maintain a positive school climate, motivate school staff, and enhance teachers' practice. Therefore, they play a major role in retaining effective teachers and ensuring their success in the classroom. Ultimately, principal leadership has significant implications for students' experiences and accomplishments.

Research notes that principal turnover can be disruptive to school progress, often resulting in higher teacher turnover and, ultimately, lower gains in student achievement. Further, the relationship between principal turnover and declines in student outcomes is stronger in high-poverty, low-achieving schools—the schools in which students most rely on education for their future success.

In addition to the costs to students and teachers if good principals leave, schools and districts must devote time and resources to replace the outgoing principals. The financial implications are significant and, often, covered by redirecting funds that had been slated for the classroom.

Turnover is a serious issue across the country. The national average tenure of principals in their schools was four years as of 2016–17. This number masks considerable variation, with 35 percent of principals being at their school for less than two years, and only 11 percent of principals being at their school for 10 years or more. The most recent national study of public school principals found that, overall, approximately 18 percent of principals were no longer in the same position one year later. In high-poverty schools, the turnover rate was 21 percent. Principal turnover also varies by state.

UNDERSTANDING PRINCIPAL TURNOVER

To understand why excessive turnover exists, researchers have investigated the relationship between principal turnover and various features of the principalship; which principals are most likely to leave; and which schools are more vulnerable to principal turnover.

WHY DO PRINCIPALS LEAVE THEIR JOBS?

The research points to five reasons that principals leave their jobs, aside from retirement or dismissal.

1. **Inadequate preparation and professional development.** Several elements of professional learning opportunities are associated with principal retention: high-quality preparation programs that carefully select and deeply prepare principals for challenging schools; access to in-service training, mentoring, and coaching that continue to support and develop principals; and collaborations between professional learning programs and school districts.
2. **Poor working conditions.** A number of conditions can influence principals' decisions about employment, including access to support; the complexity of the job and amount of time needed to complete all necessary activities; relationships with colleagues, parents, and students; and disciplinary climate.
3. **Insufficient salaries.** Salaries matter to principals in choosing new positions and in deciding whether to stay. Low salaries that do not adequately compensate principals and are not competitive with other jobs lead to higher rates of principal departure.
4. **Lack of decision-making authority.** Principals are less likely to leave their positions when they believe they have greater control of their work environment and the ability to make decisions across a range of issues such as spending, teacher hiring and evaluation, and student discipline.
5. **High-stakes accountability policies.** Counter-productive accountability policies can create disincentives for principals to remain in low-performing schools and can influence principals' mobility decisions.



WHICH PRINCIPALS ARE LESS LIKELY TO LEAVE?

Among the principal characteristics most strongly associated with job stability is educational experience, including preparedness for the position as a result of preparation and/or in-service programs and having an advanced degree. Better-prepared principals, including those who have had internships and/or mentors, are less stressed and stay longer, even if they are in high-need schools. Relatedly, some evidence suggests that principals who are viewed as more effective by teachers and supervisors are less likely to leave, unless they are promoted. Researchers suggest that perhaps because these principals feel more efficacious, they feel better about their work and are more likely to stay. Both findings suggest the importance of supporting principals in building their capacity to do the complex work required in their schools.



WHICH SCHOOLS ARE MORE VULNERABLE TO PRINCIPAL TURNOVER?

Overall, the relationships between school and student characteristics and a principal's likelihood of leaving are much stronger than relationships between principals' personal characteristics and principal turnover. The most robust evidence from the studies reviewed indicate that schools with higher percentages of students from low-income families, students of color, and low-performing students are more likely to experience principal turnover. The root of the problem, however, may be the school characteristics—such as low levels of resources, less competitive salaries, and problematic working conditions—that are often concurrent with student disadvantage. These schools are also more likely to be subject to accountability pressures, which are associated with higher turnover. Compounding this problem is the fact that these schools often struggle with student mobility and with attracting highly qualified teachers. Indeed, some research suggests that when teaching and learning conditions are more favorable, both teachers and principals are more likely to stay, regardless of the nature of the student population.





STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING PRINCIPAL TURNOVER

Given the costs of turnover, in terms of finances as well as school outcomes, efforts to retain principals are important. Policymakers and practitioners have multiple opportunities to address the root causes of principal turnover by investing in evidence-based practices to reduce principal attrition.

Based on our review of the research evidence, we have identified five strategies that schools, districts, and states can implement to reduce unnecessary principal turnover. They include:

1. **Providing high-quality professional learning opportunities**, both initial preparation and in-service, to give principals the necessary skills and competencies for school leadership
2. **Improving working conditions** to foster principals' satisfaction with their role
3. **Ensuring adequate and stable compensation** for principals, commensurate with the responsibilities of the position, to value principals' contributions and to attract and retain effective leaders
4. **Supporting decision-making authority in school leadership** to allow principals to shape decisions and solutions to address the specific needs of their staff and students
5. **Reforming accountability systems** to ensure that incentives encourage effective principals to stay in challenging schools to support teachers and improve student learning

While the existing research provides a basis for understanding the mechanisms of principal turnover, there is much more to learn. A better understanding of the implications, the influential factors, and the strategies that best address it would fill gaps in the literature and shed light on promising practices to reduce principal turnover.

UNDERSTANDING AND ADDRESSING PRINCIPAL TURNOVER: A REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH


INTRODUCTION

The typical school principal's day might begin with a before-school staff meeting at 7:00 or 8:00 a.m. and end later that evening after engaging students, parents, and community in an extracurricular or outreach event. In between, the rewards are many—watching students learning, coaching teachers as they grow professionally, and connecting the school to the community. The demands and challenges can also be great—and principal turnover is a major concern. What do we know about principal turnover, and what should we do about it?

School principals are essential for providing strong educational opportunities and improved outcomes for students. Thus, the mobility and turnover of principals can be very disruptive to students' education and overall school improvement efforts and, as research shows, damaging to teacher retention and student achievement. Policymakers, district administrators, and all school stakeholders are interested in improving the stability of school leadership.

This report reviews findings from 35 major studies that speak to the question of principal turnover.¹ Within these studies, researchers have examined principal turnover nationally and within states and districts, primarily investigating the relationships between principal turnover and various characteristics of principals, schools, students, and policies. While there is some consistency across studies, there is a good deal of variation in research questions, methods, and measurement of turnover. This variation is due in large part to the different contexts in which the studies took place—in terms of labor markets, policy environments, and school contexts which affect recruitment and





retention—as well as different aims of the researchers. Further, there are limits to the principal turnover research. Few studies consider all the possible pathways out of the principalship (which can be voluntary or involuntary and can range from leaving the profession to being promoted to other positions within education),² and few isolate the ways in which specific conditions or features of the principalship impact principals' decisions to leave or districts' decisions to retain principals. Despite these limitations we found that, when examined together, these studies provided important information to help policymakers, education leaders, and other stakeholders understand and address principal turnover.

The report begins with an explanation of why principal leadership matters and the consequences of principal mobility for student outcomes, the school culture and climate, teacher retention, and school districts' budgets. Next, we investigate the magnitude of principal mobility and the job-related factors that influence principals' decisions to leave their jobs, including inadequate preparation through in-service and pre-service professional learning, poor working conditions, insufficient compensation, lack of decision-making authority, and counterproductive accountability policies. Then, we examine which characteristics of principals and schools might suggest a need for more support in order to avoid unwanted principal turnover. Then, we consider such contributing factors as principal educational experiences, school characteristics, and student demographics.

Finally, we share what the research evidence offers to guide policymakers and practitioners, focusing on strategies schools, districts, and states can implement to stem principal turnover. We highlight five solutions put forth by researchers to address the particular contexts within which principals must navigate. They include:

1. **Providing high-quality professional learning opportunities**, both preparation and in-service, to give principals the necessary skills and competencies for school leadership
2. **Improving working conditions** to foster principals' satisfaction with their role

3. **Ensuring adequate and stable compensation** for principals, commensurate with the responsibilities of the position, to value principals' contributions and to attract and retain effective leaders
4. **Allowing decision-making authority** in school leadership to allow principals to shape decisions and solutions to address the specific needs of their staff and students
5. **Reforming accountability systems** to encourage strong principals to stay in challenging schools to support teachers and improve student learning

We conclude with a brief summary and highlight specific areas that require additional study.

WHY STABLE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP MATTERS

Principals are the second most important school-level factor associated with student achievement—right after teachers.³ As one study notes, “There are virtually no documented instances of troubled schools being turned around without intervention by a powerful leader.”⁴ This conclusion has been bolstered in recent years by numerous studies that associate increased principal quality with gains in high school graduation rates⁵ and student achievement.⁶

Further, turnover in school leadership can result in a decrease in student achievement. Studies in Texas,⁷ North Carolina,⁸ and multiple urban districts⁹ have found a clear relationship between principal turnover and lower gains in student test scores across grade levels and subjects.¹⁰ This relationship is stronger in high-poverty, low-achieving schools—the schools in which students most rely on education for their future success¹¹ and, unfortunately, the schools in which there is often the highest turnover.¹²

Principals affect student learning through their influence over schools, support of staff, and work to maintain a positive culture and climate.¹³ When principals leave, teachers' views about their school and classroom conditions, as well as their curriculum and instruction, are less favorable.¹⁴ This instability can result in a loss of shared purpose and trust.¹⁵ And when principal turnover

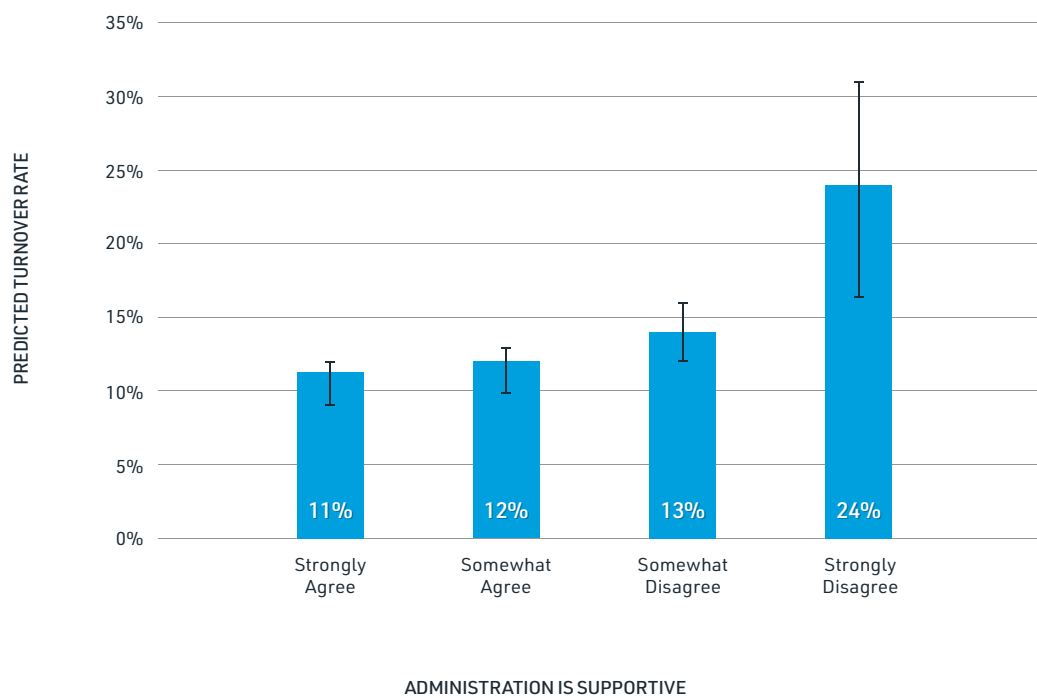
is frequent in a school, teachers and the community are less likely to support a new leader.¹⁶ Thus, a change in leadership can derail school improvement initiatives, making it difficult to build a school's capacity.¹⁷

Research demonstrates that a principal's ability to create positive working conditions and collaborative, supportive learning environments plays a critical role in attracting and retaining qualified teachers.¹⁸ Teachers cite principal support as one of the most important factors in their decisions to stay in a school or in the profession.¹⁹ A national study that examined conditions that predict teacher turnover provides evidence. When teachers strongly disagree that their administration is supportive, they are more than twice as likely to move schools or leave teaching than when they strongly agree that their administration is supportive.²⁰ (See Figure 1.)

Research also indicates that improvements in school leadership—characterized by communicating a clear vision, managing effectively, supporting teachers, providing teachers time for collaboration, and providing feedback on teachers' instruction—are strongly related to reductions in teacher turnover.²¹ And, conversely, principal turnover results in higher teacher turnover²² which, in turn, is related to lower student achievement.²³ For example, in a study of principal turnover in Miami, researchers found a strong influence of principal turnover on teacher turnover across multiple years of employment data, with the odds of teachers leaving about 17 percent higher when they have a new principal.²⁴

At a time when many schools throughout the nation are struggling to find and keep teachers, the leadership of a strong principal takes on added importance for student

Figure 1: Predicted Teacher Turnover Rate by Administrative Support



Source: Carver-Thomas, D. & Darling-Hammond, L. (2017). *Teacher turnover: Why it matters and what we can do about it (brief)*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

success. This is particularly true for those serving high numbers of students from low-income families and students of color. Importantly, high-need schools benefit most from effective principals who can find and keep talented teachers.²⁵ Multiple studies of teacher attrition in high-poverty schools have found that teachers' perceptions of their schools' leaders is a dominant factor in their decisions to remain at the school.²⁶

In addition to the costs to students and teachers of principal turnover, the financial implications are significant. Schools and districts must devote time and resources to replace outgoing principals. These resources include recruiting, hiring, onboarding, and providing professional development. The expense is substantial and, often, covered by redirecting funds that had been slated for the classroom. A 2014 report released by the School Leaders Network (SLN), a nonprofit developed to build the capacity of principals in large, high-need, urban schools, conservatively estimated the typical cost of replacing a principal to be about \$75,000, but suggested that costs could be considerably higher, especially for under-resourced districts experiencing high levels of turnover. The estimates took into account the costs of principal preparation programs, hiring, signing, internship, mentoring, and continuing education.²⁷

Considering a narrower set of costs, another study of six school districts in South Carolina identified the average cost of principal replacement as approximately \$24,000, with a range of about \$10,000 to \$51,000. Costs considered included personnel resources, physical supplies (business cards, etc.), technological resources (replacing laptops, cell phones), professional network fees, conferences, and stipends for mentorship programs.²⁸ The South Carolina study did not include principal preparation programs, internship, and professional development costs as the School Leaders Network study did. The lower cost of living in South Carolina as compared to the larger urban districts considered in the School Leaders Network report may also help explain the difference in cost estimates. More research is needed to provide better information about the financial implications of principal turnover. The data available suggest it is significant.

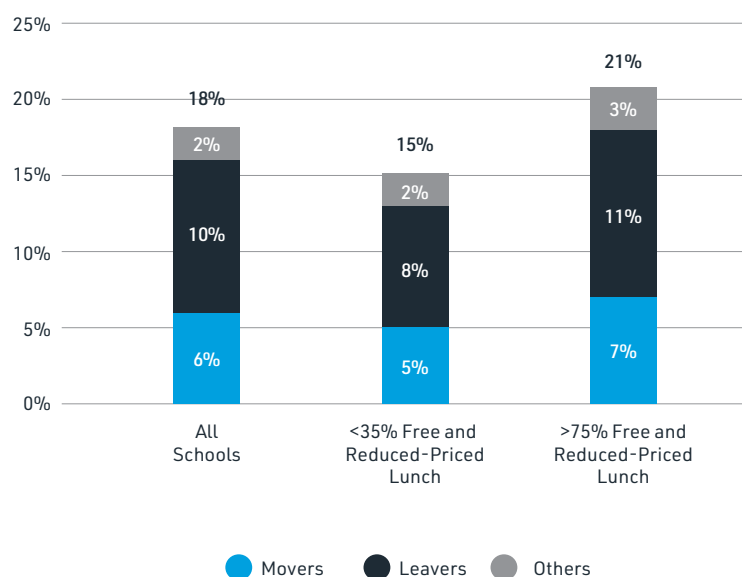




PERSISTENT PROBLEM OF PRINCIPAL TURNOVER, MOST CHALLENGING IN HIGH-POVERTY SCHOOLS

The national average tenure of principals in a given school was four years as of 2016–17.²⁹ This number masks considerable variation, with 35 percent of principals being at their school for less than two years and only 11 percent of principals being at their school for 10 years or more.³⁰ The most recent national study of public school principals found that between the 2015–16 and 2016–17 school years, approximately 82 percent of principals remained at the same school, 6 percent moved to a different school (“movers”), 10 percent left the principalship (“leavers”), and 2 percent were no longer at the school, but there is no report of their occupational status (“others”).³¹ (See Figure 2.)

Figure 2: Principal Turnover in 2016–17, All Schools, Low-Poverty, and High-Poverty Schools



NOTE: “Stayers” are principals who were principals in the same school in the current school year as in the base year. “Movers” are principals who were still principals in the current school year but had moved to a different school after the base year. “Leavers” are principals who were no longer principals after the base year. “Other” includes principals who had left their base-year school, but for whom it was not possible to determine a mover or leaver status in the current school year. The base year for 2016–17 was 2015–16.³²

Source: Goldring, R., & Taie, S. (2018). *Principal attrition and mobility: results from the 2016–17 principal follow-up survey first look* (NCES 2018-066). Washington DC: U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics.

While the national average rate of principal turnover is approximately 18 percent, there is a considerable discrepancy between the rate of turnover in high- and low-poverty schools. Notably, turnover is 6 percentage points higher in schools with high concentrations of students in poverty than in schools with few students in poverty. The mix of movers and leavers is similar.³³ (See Figure 2.) Similar discrepancies are seen at the local level. In Miami-Dade County Public Schools, for example, 28 percent of principals in the highest-poverty schools leave each year compared to 18 percent of principals in lowest-poverty schools,³⁴ and in Philadelphia, 33 percent of principals in the highest-poverty schools leave each year compared to 24 percent of principals in the lowest-poverty schools.³⁵

Principal turnover also varies by state, as shown in the following examples. A recent study conducted by the Learning Policy Institute found that, from the 2015–16 school year to the 2016–17 school year, 22 percent of California principals left their position, 7 percent moved to a different school, and 15 percent left the profession or state.³⁶ During the same time period, principal turnover was slightly higher in North Carolina. Approximately 23 percent of principals left their positions, 8 percent moved to another school in North Carolina, and 15 percent were no longer working as a principal in the state.³⁷ In contrast, from 2014–15 to 2015–16, turnover

rates were slightly lower in Washington state where only 20 percent of principals left their positions, 8 percent moved to another school in the same district, 6 percent moved to a school in a different district, and 6 percent left the state workforce.³⁸

WHY DO PRINCIPALS LEAVE THEIR JOBS?

Research about principal job satisfaction points to principals' reasons for staying or leaving. In an analysis of national survey data, researchers identified satisfied principals as reporting that they: 1) experience more positive working conditions; 2) have greater influence or decision-making authority; and 3) are content with their salaries. Dissatisfied principals reported a fourth condition: not having access to professional development.³⁹ In addition to these conditions, researchers have found that principals' mobility decisions can be influenced by accountability policies that issue sanctions associated with student outcomes, especially when unaccompanied by school supports. Job complexity can also be associated with turnover when principals must take on multiple roles and endure excessive work responsibilities.⁴⁰

These conditions, for example, were reported by principals in Chicago Public Schools. In a 2008 survey, principals reported challenging working conditions



(lack of time to evaluate teachers, difficult school climate), high-stakes accountability (pressure to get test scores up quickly), and lack of decision-making authority (difficulty removing ineffective teachers) as major impediments.⁴¹ Notably, principals in low-performing schools reported their top roadblocks to be related to working conditions, likely due to the needs of their students and the under-resourcing of their schools.⁴² In a 2018 survey, Chicago principals were asked which areas, if improved, would make them stay in their roles longer. Principals identified features of working conditions, including school funding (45 percent) and compliance requirements (45 percent), access to professional learning (38 percent), and better compensation (38 percent). (See Figure 3.)

Based on our synthesis of the research, we found that the reasons principals leave their jobs fall into five broad categories.

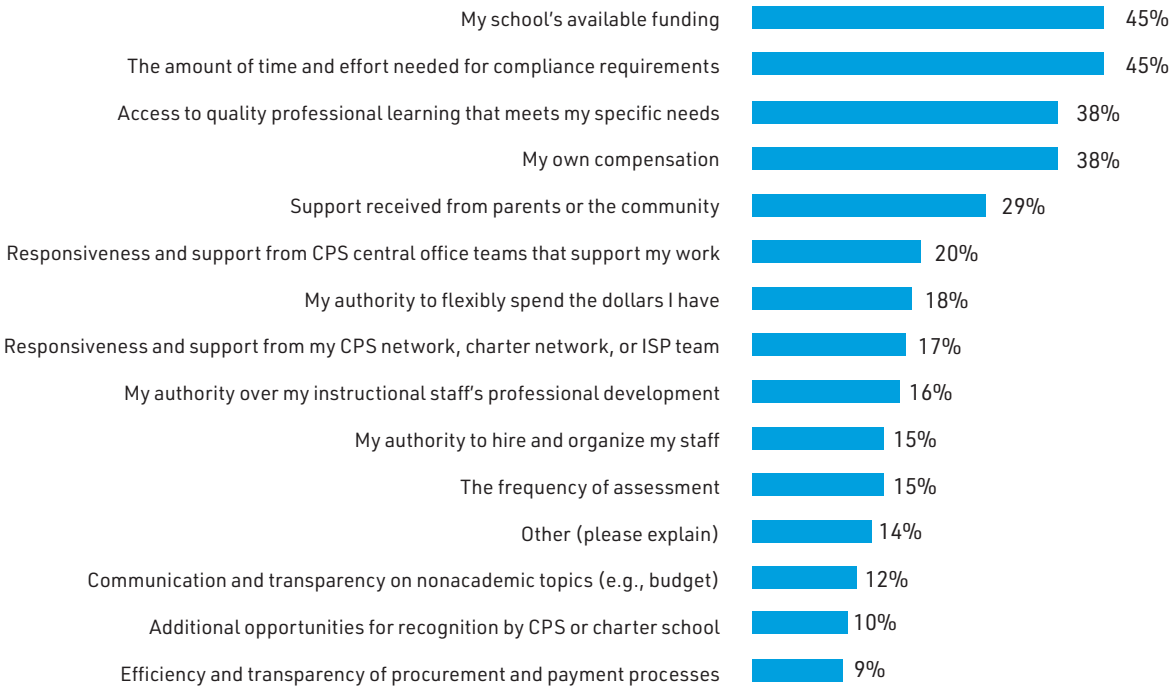
1. **Professional development**, including preparation programs and in-service supports such as mentoring and coaching, can improve principals’

sense of efficacy and satisfaction and, in turn, improve retention.⁴³ As noted above, studies have found that access to high-quality preparation programs and principal internships and mentoring significantly reduces the likelihood that principals will leave their schools.⁴⁴ Programs that carefully select and prepare principals for challenging schools, and that work with school districts to support and develop principals in those schools, are likely to produce principals who stay.⁴⁵

2. **Working conditions** experienced by principals in their schools and districts influence their mobility decisions.⁴⁶ Researchers have defined working conditions in a variety of ways. Some have focused on workload (the number of school-related work hours inside and outside of the school),⁴⁷ job complexity (having multiple roles and responsibilities),⁴⁸ and disciplinary environment (student behavior, and student and teacher absenteeism).⁴⁹ For example, studies of principal mobility in Tennessee, Miami, and Delaware found a significant relationship between

Figure 3: 2018 Principal Engagement Survey, Chicago Public Schools

Chicago principals’ reports of conditions that, if improved, would make them stay in their roles longer.



Source: The Chicago Public Education Fund, 2018. Principal Engagement Survey.



a school's disciplinary climate and principals' intentions to leave.⁵⁰ In a similar study designed to determine the factors that influence principal turnover in a large urban district, researchers found that including school climate measures in their analysis eliminated the significant relationships between student demographics and principal turnover, indicating that efforts to improve working conditions can be a constructive approach to reducing principal turnover in schools with high-need students.⁵¹ Other researchers have focused on availability of school resources, including money and staff,⁵² and relationships with students, families, teachers, and district administrators.⁵³ Lastly, researchers have considered the amount of support provided by the central office.⁵⁴ Across all these varying studies, working conditions have been associated with principal turnover.

3. **Salaries** matter to principals in choosing new positions and in deciding whether to stay.⁵⁵ In a national study of public-school principals, 76 percent agreed with the statement, "If I could get a higher paying job, I'd leave this job as soon as possible."⁵⁶ Studies examining the relationship between principal turnover and compensation have observed principals moving to positions with higher salaries.⁵⁷ For example, after controlling for other factors influencing turnover, the New York schools within the lowest tier of salaries were nearly 10 times more likely to lose their principal than those within the highest tier of salaries.⁵⁸ Dissatisfaction with salary is further exacerbated by

the fact that, in some contexts, principals' salaries can be lower than salaries of experienced teachers, despite principals' additional responsibilities and time commitment.⁵⁹ This serves as a disincentive for qualified educators from moving to a leadership position.⁶⁰ While low compensation is a factor in principal turnover, higher salaries can sometimes offset the effect of poor working conditions⁶¹ or poor school outcomes.⁶² In fact, a recent study conducted in Tennessee found that once principal salary and other school conditions are accounted for, student demographics are no longer a significant predictor of principal turnover.⁶³

4. **Decision-making authority** makes a difference in principal retention. Principals who believe they have greater control of their work environment and the ability to make decisions across a range of issues such as spending, teacher hiring and evaluation, and discipline are less likely to leave their positions.⁶⁴ Nationally, principals who perceived they had more autonomy over personnel decisions and disciplinary policies were less likely to intend to leave the principalship or their schools.⁶⁵ In a study in Delaware, principals interviewed about their career paths reported that having autonomy to make decisions and "drive the vision, culture, or mission of the school" was a reason for remaining in their positions.⁶⁶ And in another study, 45 percent of Virginia principals responding to a survey addressing the reasons for the principal shortage pointed to lack of decision-making authority and 63 percent pointed to limited influence over district policies.⁶⁷

5. **High-stakes accountability policies** that create disincentives for principals to remain in low-performing schools can influence principals' mobility decisions. Several researchers have directly addressed the relationship between principal turnover and accountability policies.⁶⁸ For example, teachers enrolled in 11 Master of School Administration programs in North Carolina in 2006 identified "increased risk," including pressure from test scores, as something that would inhibit them from becoming administrators.⁶⁹ Research on the impact of federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation has found that NCLB sanctions were associated with a higher level of principals' job stress and a higher turnover rate. These findings appear to be consistent across principal, school, or student characteristics.⁷⁰ Another NCLB study found that principals moved to schools less likely to incur NCLB sanctions and were replaced with less-effective principals, resulting in an overall decrease in principal quality.⁷¹

WHICH PRINCIPALS ARE LESS LIKELY TO LEAVE?

To better understand the dynamics of principal turnover, researchers have examined how principals with certain attributes and qualities may be more or less likely to move from their school or leave the profession. While some studies have found significant relationships between principal turnover and principal characteristics such as years of experience in the principalship⁷² and racial/ethnic background,⁷³ the findings are mixed, likely because they depend on the time frames and policy contexts in which each study took place. Researchers also considered associations between principal turnover and principals' age and gender.⁷⁴ Again, the findings are mixed, likely related to local contexts and policies.

Researchers have also studied the influence of principal effectiveness on turnover. While one study, relying on schools' relative improvement in test scores in Miami-Dade Public Schools, found no relationship between principal effectiveness and turnover,⁷⁵ two other studies did. The first, a study examining first-year principals in six large urban districts, found that new principals were more likely to leave when test scores declined in their first year.⁷⁶ The second study in Tennessee used



multiple measures of principal effectiveness including student achievement data, principal supervisor reports, and teacher surveys. Among those leaving the principalship, the study found low performers to be more likely to exit the education system altogether or move to another position; meanwhile, high performers were more likely to leave due to a promotion or move to a more desirable school.⁷⁷

Interestingly, one feature of principals associated with principal turnover is educational experience, including preparedness for the position as a result of preparation or in-service programs and particular degrees. There is evidence that better-prepared principals, including those who have had internships and/or mentors, are less stressed and stay longer, even if they are in high-need schools.⁷⁸ One study that considered principal leadership programs in Connecticut, New York, Kentucky, California, and Mississippi found that principals who participate in, and graduate from, high-quality pre- and in-service programs feel better prepared and are more likely to plan to stay in their principalship, even when working in schools with high concentrations of students of color and those living in poverty.⁷⁹



In addition to preparation and in-service programs, researchers examined how degree attainment is related to principal turnover. Nationally, principals with a master's degree or educational specialist degree/professional diploma (at least one year beyond a master's degree) are most likely to stay in their school, followed by principals with a doctorate or professional degree. Principals with a bachelor's degree or less are least likely to remain in their positions.⁸⁰ This is consistent with studies conducted in Utah and Illinois.⁸¹ However, findings on the relationship between having a doctoral degree and principal turnover were mixed. Some researchers found greater mobility among principals with doctoral degrees,⁸² possibly due in part to principals' moves to central office or other jobs in education consistent with their training.⁸³

WHICH SCHOOLS ARE MORE VULNERABLE TO PRINCIPAL TURNOVER?

Overall, the relationships between school and student characteristics and a principal's likelihood of moving to another position or leaving the profession are stronger than relationships between principal characteristics and principal turnover. The strongest evidence from the studies reviewed indicates that schools with higher

percentages of students from low-income families, students of color, and low-performing students tend to experience higher principal turnover.⁸⁴ Although these findings are consistent across studies, they may misrepresent the root of the problem, because these student characteristics are often concurrent with schools that are under-resourced, with less competitive salaries and less favorable working conditions.⁸⁵ They are also more likely to be subject to accountability pressures, which are associated with higher turnover.

Compounding limitations such as insufficient resources, schools often struggle with student mobility⁸⁶ and with attracting highly qualified teachers.⁸⁷ In studies of teacher turnover, when salaries and working conditions are included in the analyses, turnover is found to be a function of resource conditions rather than characteristics of the students.⁸⁸ Some studies have found this is the case for principal turnover, as well. Unfortunately, many of the studies reviewed do not include these factors in their analyses.⁸⁹

Principals typically leave high-poverty schools at higher rates than low-poverty schools.⁹⁰ This dynamic is seen nationally, as presented in Figure 2 (page 10), as well as at the state and local levels. In Tennessee, for example, researchers found higher turnover among schools with greater numbers of high-poverty students.⁹¹ The same pattern is seen at the local levels, where principal turnover is greater in high-poverty schools than in low-poverty schools; 28 percent versus 18 percent in Miami⁹² and 33 percent versus 24 percent in Philadelphia.⁹³ It is often the case that those principals leaving high-poverty schools are moving to schools with fewer high-poverty students.⁹⁴

As with high-poverty schools, principals leave schools with greater numbers of students of color at higher rates than schools with fewer students of color.⁹⁵

This association can be quite significant in studies that rely on administrative data, which do not include other factors such as poor working conditions or low salaries, systemic inequities strongly associated with schools with high proportions of students of color. For example, in a study to identify the variables related to principal turnover from 2010 to 2015 in Colorado urban schools, the percentage of students of color was the only variable predictive of principal turnover.⁹⁶

In another study, researchers examined statewide data in Illinois and found that principals in schools with larger percentages of students of color were more likely to leave. The data also led them to predict very different turnover rates for schools with no students of color and schools with 100 percent students of color: 13 percent versus 16 percent.⁹⁷ The turnover rate was smaller when the race of the principal matched the race of the majority of students in the school; for example, in a school with all students of color and a principal of color, the expected turnover rate was reduced to 15 percent.⁹⁸ In contrast, one study of principals in New York state found principals of schools with large percentages of students of color to be slightly less likely to move.⁹⁹

On average, principals working in academically struggling schools are more likely to move to another school or leave the profession. This is true across a range of measures of academic performance, including test scores and accountability ratings.¹⁰⁰ These findings have held true in studies in large and small districts, and across the country.¹⁰¹ This trend was evident in studies in Ohio, Tennessee, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.¹⁰² For example, in a district-wide study in Philadelphia and a state-wide study in Texas, researchers found principals' tenure to be shortest in low-performing schools and longest in high-performing schools.¹⁰³ Not all studies account for student poverty in their analysis, which is often conflated with performance.¹⁰⁴ Further, none of the studies account for the fact that low-performing schools may also suffer from lack of resources and/or poor working conditions.

While most turnover is voluntary due to retirements or such factors as principals seeking less challenging schools,¹⁰⁵ it is also the case that some mobility is explained by involuntary movement, whereby districts close schools or seek to remove ineffective school leaders. Past national policies have encouraged school closures and removal of principals from persistently low-performing schools.¹⁰⁶ This can result in school improvement in some instances, if districts are able to replace the ineffective principal with a more effective principal. For example, in a study in Washington D.C., researchers found increases in student test scores after the district replaced ineffective principals with more effective principals.¹⁰⁷

Researchers have also considered the relationship between principal turnover and other school-level characteristics such as urbanicity, school size, and school level, factors that may play out differently under distinctive policy conditions.

- **Nationwide, principals leave their schools more frequently when they are located in city and rural areas than when located in suburbs or towns.**¹⁰⁸

National 2016–17 survey results indicate that, since the previous year, nearly 1 in 5 principals in cities and rural areas left their positions, while closer to 1 in 6 principals in suburbs and towns left their positions.¹⁰⁹ Researchers investigating state data found similar results in Illinois, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Texas.¹¹⁰ However, the mix of movers and leavers differs by community type. In the 2016–17 school year, principals from rural areas were least likely to move schools, but most likely to leave the profession, while principals from cities moved schools at higher rates than principals from any other community type.¹¹¹ It may be the case that principals are more likely to move from school to school within urban areas because they have more options to move while preserving their seniority and benefits than principals in rural areas.

- **Most studies find that larger schools are associated with higher rates of principal turnover.**

The preponderance of studies reviewed find a relationship between larger student populations and higher rates of principal turnover. Researchers have found that as the number of students in a school increases, the likelihood that a principal will leave the school, either to move to another school or to leave the education system, increases. This trend occurs nationally¹¹² and has also been found in studies in Illinois, North Carolina,¹¹³ Missouri,¹¹⁴ New York,¹¹⁵ and Iowa.¹¹⁶

- **The research on school level is mixed and varies by local context.** Recent national data indicate that high school principals are slightly more likely to stay in their schools (84 percent) than middle school principals (82 percent) or elementary schools principals (82 percent).¹¹⁷ The same survey data show that principals' pathways out of the profession vary by school level as well, with high

school principals more likely to leave the education system altogether and elementary and middle level principals more likely to move to other positions in education.¹¹⁸ Researchers who have examined this over the past 15 years have reached different conclusions. Studies in Missouri¹¹⁹ and Tennessee¹²⁰ found middle level principals to be least stable, while studies in Utah,¹²¹ North Carolina, and Illinois¹²² found high school principals to be most

likely to leave their schools. The different findings likely depend on many aspects of the context in which the studies took place (e.g., school size and school conditions).

Greater understanding of how school-level characteristics interact with features of the principalship may inform policy solutions to reduce principal turnover.

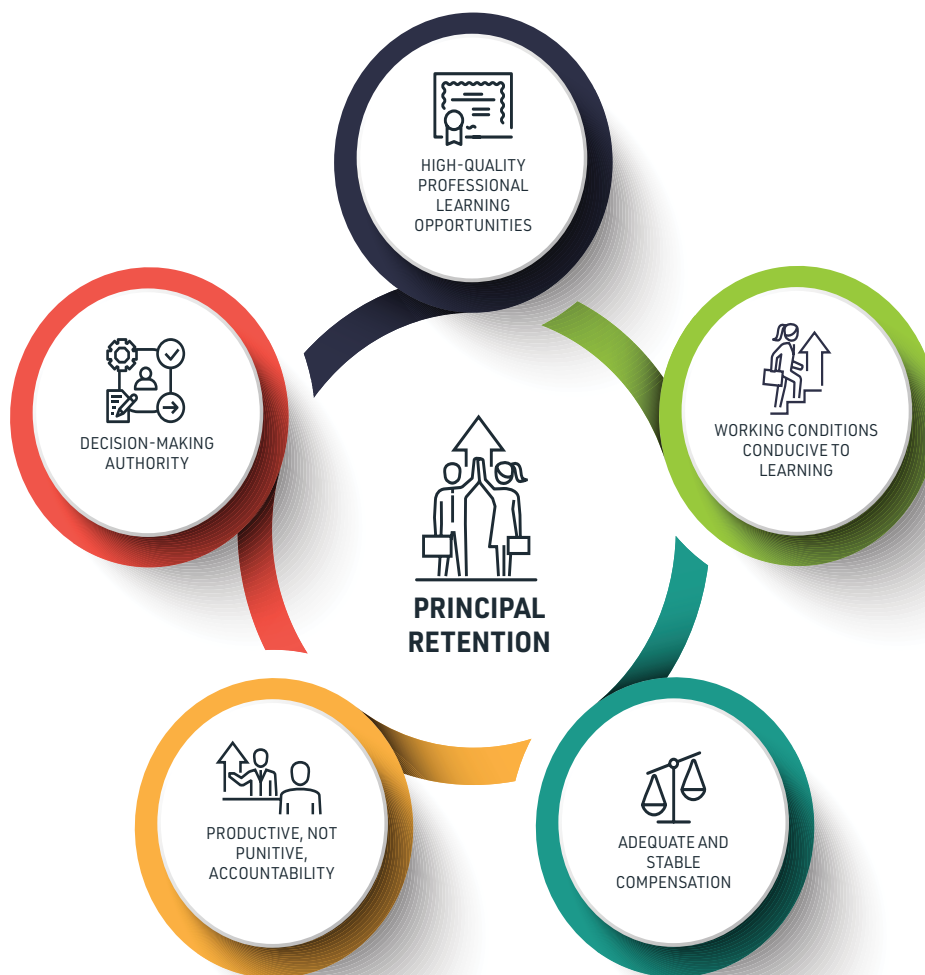


STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING PRINCIPAL TURNOVER

Principals' influence is significant, affecting teacher retention, school culture and climate, and, ultimately, student achievement. Given the costs in terms of finances as well as school outcomes, efforts to minimize principal turnover are necessary. There are multiple opportunities to address the root causes of principal turnover and invest in evidence-based practices to reduce principal attrition.

The research we have reviewed in these areas can inform strategies to reduce principal turnover. These strategies address districts' and schools' need for retaining effective principals and the concerns of school leaders by focusing on: investments in pre-service preparation and in-service support systems; support for improved working conditions; appropriate compensation; efforts to ensure principals have decision-making authority to address their schools' needs; and accountability systems that are fair and encourage principals to work in high-needs schools. (See Figure 4.)

Figure 4: *Strategies to Sustain Principal Retention*



Source: Learning Policy Institute



HIGH-QUALITY PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR PRINCIPALS

Some research has found that professional learning opportunities for principals, such as high-quality preparation programs, ongoing training, peer networks, and coaching support, can build leadership capacity and reduce principal turnover.¹²³ Such learning opportunities build the capacity of principals to lead across their full range of responsibilities, fostering school environments where adults and students thrive. Moreover, teachers appear more likely to remain in schools led by principals who participate in these types of professional learning programs. In a rigorous study of McREL's Balanced Leadership Professional Development, for example, researchers found participation in the program had a significant impact on reducing teacher turnover as well as principal turnover. Researchers posited that this could be due to principals' enhanced sense of efficacy.¹²⁴ As principal turnover is highest in the first three years on the job, providing an induction period for early-career principals can be a useful tool in stemming turnover.¹²⁵



IMPROVING WORKING CONDITIONS THAT INFLUENCE PRINCIPALS' SATISFACTION WITH THEIR ROLE

Working conditions can play a role in principals' mobility decisions. Addressing the various conditions that make worklife more stressful and less satisfying can lead to reductions in principal turnover.¹²⁶

Research findings show that principals' views of their working relationships have a strong influence on principal retention and have led researchers to suggest that central offices should play a more deliberate role in supporting principals.¹²⁷ The principal turnover research literature indicates that unwanted principal turnover might be stemmed by directing additional funding to schools to ensure effective and stable school leadership and to address poor conditions due to insufficient resources for instruction,¹²⁸ as well as problems with school climate, especially in low-performing schools.¹²⁹



COMPENSATION FOR PRINCIPALS COMMENSURATE WITH THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE POSITION

Researchers have recommended reviewing and reforming salary structures to reflect the significant responsibilities of principals in ensuring that students are provided with a safe and welcoming learning environment in which they can flourish.¹³⁰ Redesign of compensation should address the problem that principal salaries can be lower than experienced teacher salaries in some localities, serving as a disincentive to moving into school administration. Another disincentive in some jurisdictions has been an effort to replace compensation tied to experience with compensation tied largely to each year's student outcomes, resulting in unreliable compensation which leaves principals unable to plan for their personal finances, a spur to attrition.¹³¹ Further, given that labor markets can influence principal mobility, researchers have recommended that salaries be competitive with neighboring districts.¹³² This is especially important for schools considered to be more challenging due to their students' needs.¹³³



GREATER DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITY IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Principals often report feeling constrained by their lack of authority to make on-the-ground decisions affecting personnel, budgets, and working conditions that impact their school.¹³⁴ This is particularly concerning given that a sense of agency is key to job satisfaction and retention across fields.¹³⁵ The research suggests that providing adequate decision-making authority to principals over areas such as spending, staffing, teacher evaluation, and disciplinary policy may change the intentions of principals to leave their school.¹³⁶ After studying the experiences of school leaders in five urban districts, researchers recommended that principals be given the power to lead. They write, "Top-notch leaders want the leeway to run their organizations successfully: selecting a team, setting strategy, and deciding how to use resources to get the job done. Districts could make the principalship more attractive by extending this kind of autonomy."¹³⁷



REFORMING ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS TO SUPPORT PRINCIPALS IMPROVES STUDENT LEARNING

Researchers find principal turnover to be more prevalent where high-stakes accountability systems that threaten schools with reconstitution, takeover, or closure are in place.¹³⁸ By making it more difficult to retain principals, especially in schools serving the neediest children, punitive accountability systems can be counter-productive.¹³⁹ While school and principal accountability policies that have aligned curriculum and assessments, provide equitable and adequate resources, and support greater capacity among schools and educators can be valuable in supporting students' learning,¹⁴⁰ policies that threaten staff with humiliation, loss of jobs, or decreased pay have been found to work against getting and keeping high-quality leaders and staff, especially in challenging contexts.

As we have noted, research indicates that some schools, such as those struggling with poor performance and high rates of poverty, are far more vulnerable than others to principal turnover, and that it is often harder to recruit experienced principals to these roles.¹⁴¹ Given these realities, some researchers have recommended that states and districts develop strategies for training and placing more experienced and better-prepared principals in high-need schools to improve student achievement¹⁴² and stem principal turnover.¹⁴³ This would require developing programs that invest in principals' learning and create incentives and supports that attract and keep high-performing principals in high-need schools, as a number of states are proposing to do as part of their plans under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).¹⁴⁴

CONCLUSION

Principals are vital for ensuring student success. Their actions help maintain a positive school climate, motivate school staff, and enhance teachers' practice. In doing so, they play a major role in retaining effective teachers and ensuring their success in the classroom. Ultimately, principal leadership has significant implications for students' experiences

and accomplishments.¹⁴⁵ Consequently, principal turnover is associated with a less-hospitable working environment resulting in higher teacher turnover and, ultimately, lower gains in student achievement.¹⁴⁶

The national principal turnover rate is high, and some regions, states, districts, and schools face excessive churn. Principals are a powerful resource for improving student learning. Still, too many state and local systems are not investing adequately in this resource, especially for communities faced with concentrated levels of student need. Researchers have suggested that district and school leaders, as well as policymakers, implement a number of strategies to increase principal retention: Offer effective and ongoing professional development; improve working conditions; provide fair, sufficient compensation; provide greater decision-making authority; and decrease counter-productive accountability practices. In addition, a number of states

are planning to support deeper training and offer a range of supports to recruit and retain well-prepared principals in high-need schools.

While the existing research provides a basis for understanding the mechanisms of principal turnover, there is much more to learn. A better understanding of the implications, influential factors, and strategies to address it would fill gaps in the literature and shed light on promising practices to reduce principal turnover. Going forward, researchers can address gaps in our understanding by taking into account principals' pathways out of their schools,¹⁴⁷ exploring the role of working conditions and opportunities for professional learning,¹⁴⁸ considering how school context influences principal mobility,¹⁴⁹ examining the role of administrative teams and teacher-leaders, and focusing on the effects of district and school policies on principal turnover.¹⁵⁰



ENDNOTES

¹ We searched journal articles, government documents, and institutional reports using relevant search terms. We then mined reference lists for additional resources. Ultimately, we identified 35 studies conducted in North America within the past 16 years to include in our review.

² In reviewing the research on principal turnover, it is necessary to keep in mind that there are multiple pathways out of the principalship. For instance, there is voluntary movement, where the principal decides to move due to dissatisfaction and/or the existence of more attractive options, or involuntary movement, where the decision is made by the district, possibly as a result of poor performance. Leaving the role could mean retirement, promotion to a central office position, moving to another school, a “demotion,” an intentional move back to the classroom, moving to higher education to teach other leaders, or leaving the profession entirely. Competing opportunities, both inside and outside the education field, may draw practicing principals and principal candidates away from the profession. Clearly, some turnover is beneficial for schools and students, and some is not.

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⁴ Leithwood, K., Seashore Louis, K., Anderson, S. E., & Wahlstrom, K. L. (2004). *How leadership influences student learning*. New York, NY: The Wallace Foundation.

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⁸ Miller, A. (2013). Principal turnover and student achievement. *Economics of Education Review*, 36, 60–72.

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¹³ Grissom, J. A., & Bartenen, B. (2018). Principal effectiveness and principal turnover. *Education Finance and Policy*, (Just Accepted) 1–63; Burkhauser, S. (2017). How much do school principals matter when it comes to teacher working conditions? *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 39(1), 126–145; Kraft, M. A., Marinell, W. H., & Yee, D. (2016). School organizational contexts, teacher turnover, and student achievement: Evidence from panel data. *American Educational Research Journal* 53(5): 1411–49; Sabastian, J. & Allensworth, E. (2012). The influence of principal leadership on classroom instruction and student learning: A study of mediated pathways to learning. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 48(4), 626–663; Sutchter, L., Podolsky, A., Kini, T., & Shields, P. M. (2018). *Learning to lead: Understanding California's learning system for school and district leaders* (Technical report). Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute; Clotfelter, C. T., Ladd, H. F., Vigdor, J., & Wheeler, J. (2007). High-poverty schools and the distribution of teachers and principals. Working paper 1. Washington, DC: CALDER, the Urban Institute; Seashore Louis, K., Leithwood, K., Wahlstrom, K. L., & Anderson, S. E. (2010). *Investigating the links to improved student learning: Final report of research findings*. New York, NY: The Wallace Foundation.

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⁷² Studies investigating experience as a predictor of turnover typically find a positive relationship, with principals with more years of experience being more likely to remain in their positions, until retirement age, when turnover once again increases. [See Papa, F. (2007). Why do principals change schools? A multivariate analysis of principal retention. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 6(3), 267-290; Baker, B. D., Punswick, E., & Belt, C. (2010). School leadership stability, principal moves, and departures: Evidence from Missouri. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 46(4), 523-557; DeAngelis, K. J., & White, B. R. (2011). Principal turnover in Illinois public schools, 2001-2008. Illinois Education Research Council, 1-28; Gates, S. M., Ringel, J. S., Santibañez, L., Guarino, C., Ghosh-Dastidar, B., & Brown, A. (2006). Mobility and turnover among school principals. *Economics of Education Review*, 25(3), 289-302. doi: 10.1016/j.econedurev.2005.01.008; Podgursky, M., Ehler, M., Lindsay, J., & Wan, Y. (2016) An examination of the movement of educators within and across three Midwest Region states. (REL 2017-185), Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Midwest.] These relationships, however, depend on where the study takes place and what measures are used to define turnover as well as years of experience when principals leave their schools. [See Grissom, J. A., & Bartanen, B. (2018). Principal effectiveness and principal turnover. *Education Finance and Policy*, (Just Accepted), 1-63.] For example, while most studies find this relationship, one case study of six large urban districts found no clear relationship between a principal's prior experience and retention. [See Burkhauser, S., Gates, S. M., Hamilton, L. S., & Ikemoto, G. S. (2012). First-year principals in urban school districts: How actions and working conditions relate to outcomes. Technical report. RAND Corporation].

⁷³ There are a number of studies suggesting that a principal's racial/ethnic background may be related to turnover, but the findings vary based on geography and the type of move. For example, a number of studies have found greater mobility among African-American and Latino/a principals. [See Baker, B. D., Punswick, E., & Belt, C. (2010). School leadership stability, principal moves, and departures: Evidence from Missouri. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 46(4), 523-557; Tekleselassie, A. A., & Villarreal, P. (2011). Career mobility and departure intentions among school principals in the United States: Incentives and disincentives. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 10(3), 251-293.] However, others have found African-American principals to be less likely to leave their position. [See Gates, S. M., Ringel, J. S., Santibañez, L., Guarino, C., Ghosh-Dastidar, B., & Brown, A. (2006). Mobility and turnover among school principals. *Economics of Education Review*, 25(3), 289-302. doi: 10.1016/j.econedurev.2005.01.008; Solano, P. L., McDuffie, M. J., & Farley-Ripple, E. N., & Bruton, J. (2010). *Principal retention in the state of Delaware*. Newark, DE: University of Delaware, Center for Community Research and Service]. Researchers also looked at the interaction between a principal's race and the demographic composition of his or her school and found that when there was a match, principals were less likely to leave their school. [See Gates, S. M., Ringel, J. S., Santibañez, L., Guarino, C., Ghosh-Dastidar, B., & Brown, A. (2006). Mobility and turnover among school principals. *Economics of Education Review*, 25(3), 289-302. doi: 10.1016/j.econedurev.2005.01.008].

⁷⁴ While the findings are not conclusive, there is some evidence that younger and older principals are more likely to leave their schools, and middle-aged principals more likely to stay. [See Tekleselassie, A. A., & Villarreal, P. (2011). Career mobility and departure intentions among school principals in the United States: Incentives and disincentives. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 10(3), 251-293; DeAngelis, K. J., & White, B. R. (2011). Principal turnover in Illinois public schools, 2001-2008. Illinois Education Research Council, 1-28; and Ni, Y., Sun, M., & Rorrer, A. (2015). Principal turnover: Upheaval and uncertainty in charter schools? *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 51(3), 409-437]. This is likely because younger principals, like teachers, have higher turnover rates if the job is challenging for them, and older principals are more likely to retire or be recruited to the central office. Research on the relationship between a principal's gender and the likelihood of turnover are mixed, with some studies finding greater mobility among male principals, [See Gates, S. M., Ringel, J. S., Santibañez, L., Guarino, C., Ghosh-Dastidar, B., & Brown, A. (2006). Mobility and turnover among school principals. *Economics of Education Review*, 25(3), 289-302. doi: 10.1016/j.econedurev.2005.01.008 and Tekleselassie, A. A., & Villarreal, P. (2011). Career mobility and departure intentions among school principals in the United States: Incentives and disincentives. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 10(3), 251-293] and others finding no relationship. [See Ni, Y., Sun, M., & Rorrer, A. (2015). Principal turnover: Upheaval and uncertainty in charter schools? *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 51(3), 409-437].

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ABOUT NASSP

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) is the leading organization of and voice for principals and other school leaders across the United States. NASSP seeks to transform education through school leadership, recognizing that the fulfillment of each student's potential relies on great leaders in every school committed to the success of each student. Reflecting its long-standing commitment to student leadership development, NASSP administers the National Honor Society, National Junior Honor Society, National Elementary Honor Society, and National Student Council.

The NASSP Policy & Advocacy Center is a trusted resource and online hub for legislative news, policy information, data, research, and advocacy tools related to K-12 education and additional school leaders' interests. It elevates the influence of school leaders by providing ways for them to directly communicate with policymakers at all levels of government. It is also a space to learn about important education issues affecting schools, and serves as a portal through which stakeholders and constituents can take action.

ABOUT THE LEARNING POLICY INSTITUTE

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The cost of teacher turnover in Alaska

**A study by the Center for Alaska Education Policy Research
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Executive summary

Low teacher retention - high turnover - affects student learning. Teacher recruitment and retention are challenging issues in Alaska. Rates vary considerably from district to district and year to year, but between 2004 and 2014, district-level teacher turnover in rural Alaska averaged 20%, and about a dozen districts experienced annual turnover rates higher than 30%. High turnover rates in rural Alaska are often attributed to remoteness and a lack of amenities (including healthcare and transportation); teachers who move to these communities face additional challenges including finding adequate housing and adjusting to a new and unfamiliar culture and environment.

Though urban districts have lower teacher turnover rates, they also have challenges with teacher recruitment and retention, particularly in hard-to-fill positions (such as special education and secondary mathematics) and in difficult-to-staff schools. Annually, Alaskan school districts hire about 1,000 teachers (500-600 are hired by its five largest districts), while Alaska's teacher preparation programs graduate only around 200.

The costs associated with teacher turnover in Alaska are considerable, but have never been systematically calculated,¹ and this study emerged from interests among Alaska education researchers, policymakers, and stakeholders to better understand these costs. Using data collected from administrators in 37 of Alaska's 54 districts, we describe teacher turnover and the costs associated with it in four key categories: separation, recruitment, hiring, and induction and training. Our calculations find that the total average cost of teacher turnover is \$20,431.08 per teacher. Extrapolating this to Alaska's 2008-2012 turnover data, this constitutes a cost to school districts of approximately \$20 million per year.

We focused on costs to Alaskan school districts, rather than costs to individual communities, schools, or the state. Our calculation is a conservative estimate, and reflects typical teacher turnover circumstances - retirement, leaving the profession, or moving to a new school district. We did not include unusual circumstances, such as mid-year departures or terminations. Our cost estimate includes costs of separation, recruitment, hiring, and orientation and training, and excludes the significant costs of teacher productivity and teacher preparation. We suggest that not all turnover is bad, nor are all turnover costs; and emphasize the need to focus on teacher retention as a goal, rather than reducing turnover costs.

Even with conservative estimates, teacher turnover is a significant strain on districts' personnel and resources, and in an era of shrinking budgets, teacher turnover diverts resources from teaching and learning to administrative processes of filling teacher vacancies. Our recommendations include:

- Better track teacher turnover costs
- Explore how to reduce teacher turnover costs
- Support ongoing research around teacher turnover and its associated costs
- Explore conditions driving high teacher turnover, and how to address them

¹For a notable exception, a Dr. Roy Roehl the University of Alaska Fairbanks conducted preliminary calculations in the spring of 2016.

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[A district] spends time and money trying to hire the person who best fits each available job and who enjoys putting in the effort required to accomplish the [school's] mission and goals. Further time and effort is spent on training every new hire. However, what happens when someone leaves, whether voluntarily or involuntarily? The [district] must spend time and resources looking for a replacement, training the replacement, and so on – a very expensive process. The cost to the [district and the school] is made up of both direct costs that are easily measurable and indirect costs that may not be as easy to gauge precisely. All told, the total cost of turnover can take a heavy toll on a [district's] finances.

- Karsan, 2007, p. 33

Even though districts typically allocate 80% of their operating budget to personnel (Thompson, Crampton, & Wood, 2012),

[s]urprisingly little work has been done to develop methodologies and standards that districts and schools can use to make reliable estimates of turnover costs. Even less is known about how to account for the costs of turnover at the school level, which encompasses a different set of costs than those expended at the district level and for which different methodologies are required. Finally, we know little about how the cost of teacher turnover varies at both the district and school levels, and for teachers of different grades and disciplines. In the absence of standardized models and methods, turnover costs remain buried in discreet line items of budgets and are practically invisible at the school level. As a result, decisions regarding resource allocation, teacher recruitment, professional development (PD), teacher retention efforts, and workforce restructuring – all factors that contribute to turnover costs – are made without accounting for the true costs that teacher turnover imposes on districts and schools. (Levy, Joy, Ellis, Jablonski, & Karelitz, 2012, p. 104)

The objective of the project was not to explore the fiscal impacts teacher turnover in Alaska, but rather to quantify the cost of teacher turnover itself.

What is teacher turnover?

Teacher turnover happens when educators leave their classroom positions and are replaced by different ones. We draw from the current literature to define teacher turnover in four broad categories:²

- **Retirement** happens when a teacher ends his or her teaching professional career, usually when he or she has reached a certain age or years of service. With this type of turnover, there are usually some salary savings to the district because typically districts will replace the veteran teacher with one who is less experienced and therefore less costly than the one who left (Milanowski & Odden, 2007).
- **Attrition** happens when a teacher leaves the profession entirely, premature to his or her retirement. Boe, Cook, and Sunderland (2008) estimate this type of leaving accounts for about 24-37% of teacher turnover; about a third of these teachers takes non-teaching positions in education.

² Though other researchers have made some different classifications for these categories (see Barnes, Crowe, & Schaefer, 2007) the four categories defined here are used in many analyses, and account for all types of turnover.

- **Migration** happens when a teacher leaves his or her current job for a teaching position in a new district.³
- **Transfer** happens when a practicing teacher moves to a new subject area. This is most commonly seen in teachers moving from General Education (GENED) to Special Education (SPED) and vice versa. While nationally the rate of these transfers is almost even (Boe et al., 2008), SPED teachers are more likely to transfer to GENED than leave teaching entirely. Transfer is characteristic of the teaching profession, but the reasons for it are not always clear.

Though teacher retirement is generally indicative of teacher stability, too much of any of the other three types – even if they are good moves for individual teachers – causes significant administrative and financial challenges for districts. These different types of teacher turnover incur different costs, and at different levels. For example, transfers are relatively inexpensive at the district level, but have significant impacts on costs at the individual schools affected.

In the national context, turnover rates for teachers are not higher than other professions (Boe et al., 2008), though patterns vary considerably. Teacher turnover is highest in first few years of teaching (Barnes, Crowe, & Schaefer, 2007). Nationwide, 66% of teachers leave their schools in their first five years, and any time a teacher starts in a new school, their expected longevity is between 5.8 and 6.5 years (Cannon & Becker, 2015).

In Alaska, teacher turnover is consistently higher in rural schools and districts. At the district level, between 1999 and 2012, it averaged 20% in rural districts, and 10% in Alaska's five largest districts which are mostly (though not entirely), urban or suburban (Hill & Hirshberg, 2013). At the school level, between 2015-2016 and 2016-2017, rural-remote schools had over 30% teacher turnover; schools in rural hubs had 22%, and in more populated areas the school turnover rate was 14-16% (Stevens & Pierson, 2017). Figure 1 illustrates turnover rates for teachers in Alaska's rural districts.

What are the impacts of teacher turnover?

Some teacher turnover is beneficial. Some teachers leave because they are not good fits, and though a stable school climate is desirable, it is also important to have new ideas and diversity (Barnes et al., 2007). Boe et al. (2008) noted that many leaving teachers are replaced by returning or more experienced ones, and when teachers take non-teaching positions in education, this also serves the profession in positive ways. Also, retirement is not generally a concern in conversations about reducing teacher turnover; there is a cost, but teacher retirements are indicative of stability, rather than a problem (Barnes et al., 2007; Levy et al., 2012).

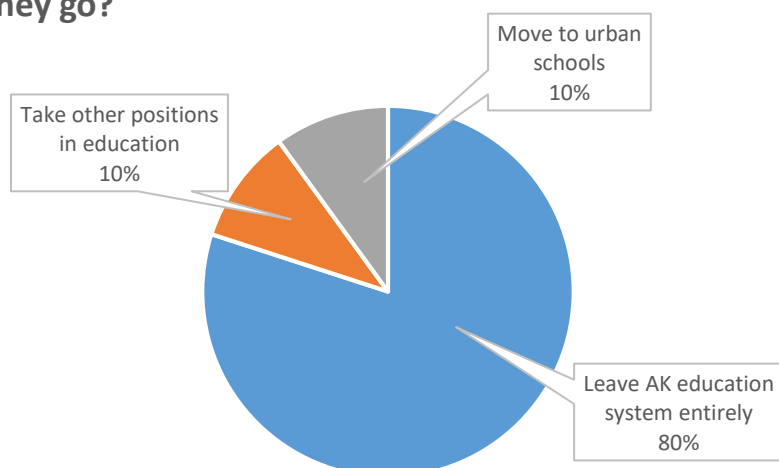
Whereas a small amount of turnover may be positive, high turnover affects the continuity in instruction, leads to a lack of teaching expertise to make curriculum decisions, necessitates ongoing support and mentoring for new teachers, and requires time and resources to be reallocated for finding and training replacements (Carroll & Thomas, 2007; Loeb, Darling-Hammond, & Luczak, 2005). Thus the burden and

³ In-district migration (moving from one school to another in the same district) is a significant cost, but is beyond scope of our study; Boe et al. (2008) noted that much in-district migration is related to administrative staffing decisions, rather than teacher choice though there are preferred schools that teachers voluntarily move to in this type of turnover.

cost affect not just a single classroom, but permeate the entire school and ultimately encourage more teachers to leave, creating a cycle of turnover.⁴

Figure 1

**20% of teachers leave Alaska's rural districts each year.
Where do they go?**



When teachers leave Alaska's rural districts, most leave the Alaska education system entirely. A smaller proportion take other positions in the education profession or move to urban schools. These data represent 6,402 teachers who left Alaska's rural school districts between 2001 and 2012. Adapted from Hill and Hirshberg (2013).

Teacher turnover erodes school climate

When schools or districts have to dedicate ongoing resources to hiring and they have continuous instability, the cycle erodes school climate (Shields et al., 2001) and makes it difficult to build a stable community within schools (Carroll & Thomas, 2007; Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006; Milanowski & Odden, 2007). Because new teachers are more likely to leave their positions (Allensworth, Ponisciak & Mazzeo, 2009; Grissmer & Kirby, 1997), seasoned teachers have to constantly mentor new ones, which is taxing and time consuming. The situation frustrates mentor teachers who take time away from their own classrooms to perform these duties, and ultimately this leads to burnout (Arens & Morin, 2016; Guin, 2004). Additionally, the increase in teacher turnover results in the decrease in trust and collaboration, as teachers need time to develop new collegial relationships (Allensworth et al., 2009; Guin, 2004). Guin (2004) documented that teacher turnover is higher in schools where teachers perceive

⁴ Though our work focuses specifically on teachers, it is important to note that administrator turnover also has a significant impact on schools and students. Superintendent stability is critical to school quality (Collier, 2016), and in the past five years 72% of Alaska school districts have experienced Superintendent turnover (Stevens & Pierson, 2017). Principal attrition also has a significant impact on school climate (Guin, 2004), and principal turnover in Alaska has been between 16% and 12% in the last five years, with higher rates in rural schools (Stevens & Pierson, 2017).

poor school climate,⁵ and Boe et al. (2008) estimated that about a quarter of teachers who leave do so for job-related reasons.

Teacher turnover impacts teacher professional development

Districts and schools who experience high teacher turnover have to offer the same onboarding and professional development (PD) programs each year, which results in limited PD opportunities for continuing teachers (Guin, 2004). By contrast, low turnover schools with continuing staff can do more extensive and comprehensive PD that can help to unify staff. These opportunities are never actualized if districts and schools continually spend dollars for onboarding new teachers (Shields et al., 2001).

Mentoring new teachers is often a responsibility of the veteran teaching staff, and high turnover typically means that there is an inadequate number of experienced teachers to do this work (Shields et al., 2001). This both impacts the mentoring of new teachers, and taxes the time and energies of the mentor teachers (Guin, 2004). Guin (2004) documented that in the case of large urban school districts, “[t]he continual loss of teachers had a negative impact on the momentum of instruction at the school” (p. 11), as the same veteran teachers are always mentoring their new colleagues.

Teacher turnover affects instructional quality and student achievement

Teacher turnover impairs instructional quality in two ways: by challenging the curricular planning and implementation process at the school level (Guin, 2004) and impacting individual teacher quality (Milanowski & Odden, 2007). For teachers new to the profession, gains in their effectiveness are most pronounced in the first and second years of teaching, and most reach their peak effectiveness between five (Rosenholtz, 1985) and ten years (Pennucci, 2012), though some research documents significant teacher improvement into their twentieth year (Huang & Moon, 2009). After that, gains are still made, but they are more modest (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2006; Ladd, 2008; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). Unfortunately, high turnover is synonymous with inexperienced teachers, and ultimately results in decreased student achievement (Barnes et al., 2007; Levy, Fields, & Jablonski, 2006; Rivkin et al., 2005). Even for teachers with classroom experience, transitioning to a new environment requires additional time and support, especially if they are moving to a school that is culturally distinct from their previous experience (Guin, 2004). This is especially pronounced for those moving to rural Alaska. The correlation between high turnover and low student achievement has been demonstrated in Alaska. In 2013 the number of students proficient in reading was 46.9% in Alaska’s five highest-turnover districts, compared with 85.8% in its five lowest turnover districts (Hill & Hirshberg, 2013). Though these data cannot demonstrate a causal link, the correlations are compelling.

What factors are associated with teacher turnover?

Knowing the challenges associated with teacher turnover, we turn to the factors that correlate with and contribute to it. We focus on three key considerations from the empirical literature: working conditions, workload, and teacher characteristics. Additionally, we note considerations unique to the Alaska teaching and hiring context.

⁵ The importance of school climate cannot be overstated, but is also difficult to measure. Efforts are underway in California to better quantify this concept (see the California State Board of School Conditions and Climate Group website, <https://lcff.wested.org/school-conditions-and-climate-group-scope-of-work/>.)

Working conditions

When controlling for student characteristics, Loeb et al. (2005) noted that working conditions are best predictors of teacher turnover. Working conditions include the physical work environment, school leadership, workload, and compensation.

Physical environment

The physical environment includes having enough textbooks for students to take them home, access to computers, reasonable class size, having enough space in the class to accommodate students, and clean/functioning school bathrooms. Poor perceptions of the physical environment including using space that is not a classroom for instruction (e.g., teaching in the gym or cafeteria); uncomfortable temperatures; excess noise that makes it difficult for students to concentrate; and evidence of roaches, rats, or mice, are correlated with increased turnover (Loeb et al., 2005).

School leadership

Poor or unstable leadership contributes to higher teacher turnover (Allensworth et al., 2009; Ingersoll, 1999); improvement in this realm can lead to increases in instructional quality, student performance in assessments, and teacher development (Guin, 2004). Hirshberg, Hill, and Kasemodel (2014) found that 45% of teachers in rural Alaska expressed dissatisfaction with district leadership, and 33% with school leadership.

Workload

High or unmanageable workloads lead to teacher burnout and ultimately to teacher turnover (Arnes & Morin, 2016; Hakanen et al., 2006; Lee & Asforth, 1990). Hirshberg, Kasemodel, Cope, and DeFeo (2016) noted that teachers who left rural Alaska were more likely to report that they were “overwhelmed by job demands” (Hirshberg et al., 2014).

Compensation

Low salaries also predict higher turnover (Loeb et al., 2005), and in Alaska, though they are higher than the national average, salaries are generally – and in some districts significantly – lower than needed to attract and retain qualified teachers (Hirshberg, DeFeo, Berman, & Hill, 2015), but only 14% of teachers in rural Alaska reported that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their compensation.

Analysis of working conditions in Alaska suggests that a combination of improvements – rather than attention to just one area – will be required to improve teacher turnover patterns in the state (DeFeo, Hirshberg, & Hill, in review).

School characteristics

As with many social issues, the problem of teacher turnover is intensified in the communities and schools serving the most marginalized populations. Poor working conditions described above are more likely to occur in low-income schools (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Olsen & Anderson, 2007; Tissington & Grow, 2007). Consistently across the literature, researchers document that higher-poverty, higher-minority, and lower-performing schools have higher teacher turnover rates (Barnes et al., 2007; Clotfelter et al., 2004; Guin, 2004; Levy et al., 2006), and this is problematic for both student achievement and filling vacancies. When high-performing schools experience turnover, they tend to have a high number of qualified applicants for open positions, and the hiring process can help schools to reinforce their values. By contrast, low-income schools have vacancies more frequently and have fewer qualified applicants, thus they must spend disproportionately more time and dollars on recruitment. Per

teacher costs are higher, and thus a higher proportion of scarcer resources – both manpower and dollars – needs to be diverted from teaching and learning (Milanowski & Odden, 2007; Texas Center for Education Research, 2000; Watlington, Shockley, Guglielmino, & Felsher, 2010), and the proportional impacts are magnified (Barnes et al., 2007).

Teacher characteristics

Teacher quality also predicts retention or turnover; interestingly, the highest- and lowest-performing teachers are retained at about the same rates (Chingos, 2014). New teachers have higher turnover rates than those who are mid-career (Education Week, 2000). Early-career teachers who themselves have higher IQs, GPAs, and standardized test scores (Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1996; Murnane, 1996) or whose students make the greatest gains in standardized test performance (Chingos, 2014) are among ones most likely to leave (Quartz, 2003). Math, science and SPED teachers leave at higher rates than their colleagues who teach in other fields (Boe, Bobbit, & Cook, 1997; Grissmer & Kirby, 1992). Male teachers are more likely than females to leave the profession permanently to look for opportunities in other fields (Murnane, 1996).

Additional Alaska considerations

In addition to the conditions noted in the national literature, Alaskan districts – particularly rural communities – have additional characteristics associated with high turnover including poor community connections, environmental factors, place of preparation, and cultural differences.

Poor community connections

A 2013 survey of almost 300 rural Alaska teachers found strong correlations between teacher retention and their feelings of connectedness to their communities; teachers who left were far less likely to find living in their community rewarding, and more likely to feel they were not supported by families or community members (Hill et al., 2014). Additionally, teachers who left rural Alaska noted feeling of isolation/loneliness and a desire for a relationship or missing extended family. Hirshberg, et.al. (2016) noted that teacher turnover affects communities as well; residents are unwilling to invest in creating relationships with educators who they believe will be gone in a year or two. This leads to a cycle of teachers feeling unsupported and not integrated in to the community, while concomitantly community members perceive schools as distant and disconnected. In a survey of teachers who left their positions in rural Alaska, 49% said they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with parent or community support (Hirshberg et al., 2014).

Environmental factors

Teachers also cite environmental conditions – both weather and living quarters – as causes for turnover in rural areas. Cope and Germuth's (2012) study of 120 teacher stayers from Lower Kuskokwim School District and Northwest Arctic Borough School District found that the cold and dark of winter, distance from family and/or urban centers, and high expenses are reasons teachers leave Alaska. Hirshberg et al. (2016) noted poor living conditions as a factor influencing turnover in rural Alaska; many teachers also expressed they were misinformed or misunderstood the living conditions there prior to their appointments. Hirshberg et al. (2016) also noted the high cost of village living has a negative impact on teacher retention.

Place of preparation

In Alaska, the clearest distinction in teacher turnover is place of preparation. Between 2007 and 2012, turnover rates for early-career teachers was 11.6% for those prepared in-state, and 22.5% for those prepared outside (Hill & Hirshberg, 2013). Thus, while in any given year the proportion of Alaska-prepared teachers hired is only about 15%, Alaska-prepared teachers generally comprise about 30% of the Alaska teaching workforce. This may reflect a more effective preparation for the Alaska context, but likely also reflects these teachers' existing connections to Alaska and desire to remain in state.

Cultural differences

Adjusting to a new set of community and cultural expectations and learning to teach an unfamiliar but culturally relevant curriculum also impacts teacher turnover. Teachers both find it challenging and need additional support and time to develop the skills to effectively teach student populations that are high minority, culturally distinct, or English language learners⁶ (Guin, 2004). Meyers et al. (2008) concluded that training for workers entering a different cultural environment must address emotional and social factors, not just a cognitive understanding of cultural differences. In Alaska, Hirshberg et al. (2016) noted inability to adapt to cultural differences contributed to teacher turnover.

What are the costs associated with teacher turnover?

Though we have good data about the patterns of turnover and the importance of retaining good and experienced teachers both nationally and in Alaska, there are not good data about the costs associated with teacher turnover. The issue draws attention of researchers, policymakers, and administrators who call for mechanisms to measure the cost of teacher turnover reliably (Watlington et al., 2010). The literature breaks teacher turnover costs into distinct categories: separation, recruitment, hiring, orientation and training, performance productivity, and preparation, which are represented in figure 2.

1. Separation

Separation activities are the administrative processes that take place when teachers leave. These include exit interviews; closing out payroll and benefits; and updating databases, websites, technology, or security. In Alaska, they may also include housing maintenance costs. Though the list of activities is extensive, these account for the smallest proportion of the total teacher turnover cost. Synar and Maiden (2012) estimated costs in categories 1, 3, 4, and 5, and calculated that separation accounts for 2.29% of the cost of teacher turnover in urban school districts. Similarly, Levy et al. (2012) estimated costs for categories 1-4, and calculated separation costs to be 3.6% of teacher turnover costs for regular (non-specialty) teaching positions in California.

2. Recruitment

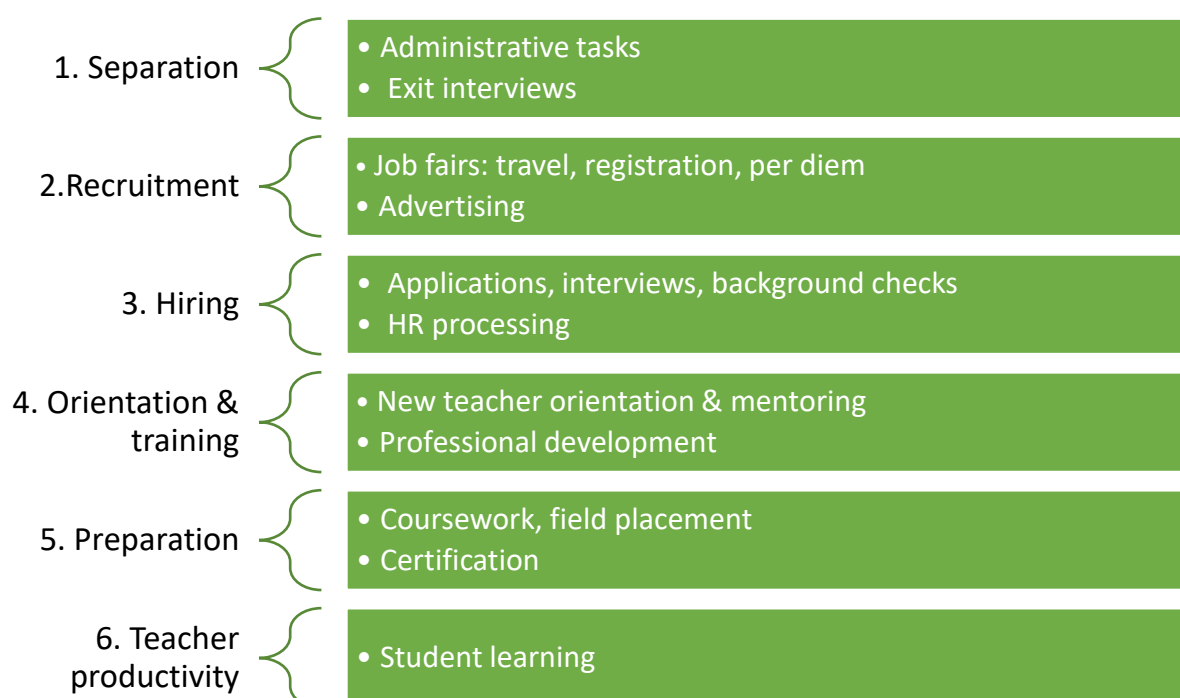
Recruitment includes the activities necessary to find suitable applicants to fill an open teaching position. These costs are primarily advertising and job fair participation, but recruitment costs vary considerably between districts and amongst different positions. Loeb et al. (2005) noted that when schools report that they have difficulties filling vacancies, this may be more indicative of selectivity than the number of applicants, and schools that "insist on filling positions with highly skilled teachers may have more difficulty filling vacancies than schools with high turnover that hire whomever they can find" (p. 58). Additionally, a district's attractiveness to teachers will affect their applicant pool. High turnover schools

⁶ Paraprofessional turnover also has a negative impact on schools and student achievement, especially when they are the ones who are linguistically and culturally like the student body (Guin, 2004).

in low-income, high-minority areas tend to have fewer applicants in general, as well as fewer qualified applicants, meaning that these districts spend a disproportionate number of dollars on recruitment. Furthermore, some positions are more difficult to fill and, even within the same district or school, will incur higher costs than others. For example, Loeb et al. (2005) estimated that recruiting a secondary science teacher costs 2.5 times as much as recruiting an elementary teacher.

Figure 2

Cost categories for teacher turnover



The literature typically describes the costs of teacher turnover in 6 broad categories: separation, recruitment, hiring, orientation and training, preparation, and teacher productivity. These costs in these categories include time and wages dedicated to performing the activities, as well as material costs (such as software, supplies, travel, or fees) associated with them. This figure gives an example of costs in each category; a more comprehensive list is included in Appendix A.

3. Hiring

Hiring includes such costs and time commitments as screening, interviewing, and selecting applicants; background checks; contract preparation and school board approval; setting up payroll and benefits; creating accounts and webs updates; housing searches; and facilitating the certification process. Depending on the size of the applicant pool and the individuals involved in the hiring and interview process, the amount of time spent on these tasks is highly variable. Synar and Maiden (2012) estimated that these activities constitute 8.64% of the cost of teacher turnover in categories 1, 3, 4, and 5.

4. Orientation and training

Orientation and training costs are extremely difficult to estimate because they are not a line item, and are dispersed across different categories in the budget (Levy et al., 2012). Some PD is offered routinely to all teachers, while other PD is specific to only new teachers. Some PD is offered by the district staff,

some is contracted out, some is done within individual schools, and some requires districts to send teachers to external providers, such as professional conferences or training. These activities vary by position, the incoming teacher's experience level and needs, and funding availability within districts. Many districts fund these activities by applying for external and fixed-term grants, with PD opportunities often dissipating when funding wanes (Barnes, Crowe, & Schaefer, 2007). Calculating these highly variable costs is a challenge, but they constitute a high proportion of teacher turnover costs. Synar and Maiden (2012) estimated that training is 48.15% of the costs in categories in 1, 3, 4, and 5. Levy et al. (2012) estimated that it is 67.0% of costs in categories 1-4 for regular teaching positions. Levy et al. (2012) further noted that when teachers leave, they take this PD and this investment the district made in them. Additionally, when teachers change jobs within the system, the district may lose PD investments that are not transferrable. Levy et al. (2012) noted that since training and development is a school and a district cost, hiring experienced teachers could reduce costs in this category.

5. Performance productivity

Performance productivity is the trickiest category to estimate, and losses in teacher quality are an indirect but significant cost of teacher turnover (Karsan, 2007). The effectiveness of the leaving and incoming teachers is highly variable; it is possible that an incoming teacher would be more productive (Barnes et al., 2007), and there are also salary cost savings when a district replaces a teacher with one who has less experience, which may offset some performance productivity losses. Attempts to calculate these costs involve complex modeling. Synar and Maiden (2012) calculated that 40.92% of the cost of teacher turnover in categories 1, 3, 4, and 5 is in the area of performance productivity. However, they used 20% monthly increase in performance productivity to calculate productivity costs, suggesting that in 5 months, new teachers are fully up to speed, which underestimates productivity losses in education, where the literature consistently documents that teachers make substantial gains during at least their first 5 years (Pennucci, 2012; Rosenholtz, 1985) or need additional time to be fully effective in a new cultural setting (Guin, 2004). Because our work focused on direct costs, the calculation for teachers' performance productivity is beyond the scope of the data presented in our analysis. However, costs in this category are usually overlooked because they are soft, highly variable, and difficult to calculate (Synar & Maiden, 2012) even though Milanowski and Odden (2007) noted that lost productivity is one of the most important and highest costs of teacher turnover.

6. Preparation

The costs of teacher preparation (educating teachers so they are qualified to serve in classrooms) varies considerably, even in Alaska. For example, a four-year Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education includes several short field placements plus an extended student teaching opportunity. A University of Alaska student who wants to teach secondary science, math, or other content at the middle or high school level generally must earn a bachelor's degree in his or her content area and take at least an additional full year of coursework to earn a Master of Arts in Teaching degree. All teacher candidates require field supervision; they are placed with master teachers and are also visited and observed by university faculty; depending on their field placement, time and travel costs for supervising faculty may vary considerably.

All degrees incur costs borne by the student, such as tuition, books, and fees; estimated student cost for a four-year degree at the University of Alaska Anchorage is \$25,822 for an in-state student (National Center for Education Statistics Multiyear Tuition Calculator, 2017). Some of this cost may be supported

or subsidized by state scholarship programs. Additionally, the state of Alaska spends on average \$13,978 in public funding per year for each full-time undergraduate student (State Higher Education Executive Officers, 2015).

Other indirect (and difficult to measure) costs

As Synar and Maiden (2012) noted, direct costs are the same for all teachers, and these are relatively easier to quantify,⁷ but they do not account for all considerations. Though these indirect costs are beyond the scope of our study, there are examples and discussion in the literature, both from scholars who study teacher turnover, as well as other industries. Karsan (2007) notes,

indirect costs include such factors as ... loss of morale when a senior person leaves, loss of knowledge and experience, and lost opportunities that a seasoned employee would have followed up on but that a new one might not spot. (p. 34)

In addition to the direct and indirect costs and impacts on districts, schools, and students, TCER notes that there is also a human cost to teachers themselves. Teachers invest time and money in their education, and if they leave the profession, they lose both in direct financial and indirect personal ways.

Challenges in calculating teacher turnover costs

Though the costs of teacher turnover are substantial, a validated formula for standardizing these measures is yet to be developed, in part because of the challenges of doing so. Barnes et al. (2007) provided the most comprehensive overview of these challenges, many of which we experienced, noting that:

- Many small districts collect data by hand, whereas districts with databases do not document costs in a systematic way.
- In large districts, turnover costs are spread across many departments, which creates data silos as departments collect data in different formats and for different purposes, thus many systems are not compatible.
- Grant funding changes the types of activities which are performed (particularly related to PD) and can span categories of costs and departments.
- Districts manage their human resources processes and functions in different ways, so how they experience these costs varies tremendously; Milanowski and Odden (2007) echoed this challenge, saying, “it is likely that every district has idiosyncrasies in its teacher replacement processes that make administrative costs vary” (p. 19).
- Fixed costs are distributed across widely varying numbers of teacher separations and replacements (even in the same district from one year to the next) thus making it difficult to calculate a consistent per-teacher cost.
- Retirement complicates calculations – many teachers who retire could stay longer; though researchers generally do not look at retirement as a teacher turnover concern, it is not independent of the turnover considerations typically associated with the other types or categories.

⁷ As we will demonstrate, none of the costs are simple to quantify. As the literature documents time and again, the costs are highly variable, even amongst schools in the same district (Barnes et al., 2007; Levy et al., 2012).

- No matter the district size, the costs are borne at different levels – most notably by the district and school. Barnes et al. (2007) noted, “[t]o determine the cost of teacher turnover, a school district needs to be able to collect and *connect* teacher, school, and cost information” (p. 72).

Levy et al.(2012) noted two additional challenges: first, administrator turnover makes it especially difficult to calculate costs, as new administrators are unfamiliar with district processes and have difficulty reporting these costs for research purposes.⁸ Additionally, they noted that records are frequently unavailable or incomplete, requiring researchers to make many assumptions.

- We learned that many of these tasks described in the cost categories are done piecemeal, and people do not know precisely how much time they spend doing them, as they happen between and concurrent with other tasks. People are not often aware of their own behaviors in tasks they do routinely (Spradley, 1980); even individuals who are confident about their time management skills are quite poor at estimating how long it takes to perform a range of activities (Burt & Kemp, 1994).

These challenges are reflected in widely differing estimates for the cost of teacher turnover. For example, even using the same calculator and method, in a 10-year period in the same district, Synar and Maiden (2012) estimated that costs ranged from 3.2 million to 5.7 million (inflation adjusted), and their findings illustrate the year-to-year variability of costs, even in a single district.

The variability underscores that districts cannot fully rely on national trends or calculations derived from other research. Barnes et al. (2007) explained that districts need

to track and analyze teacher turnover and important teacher and school variables [because] [b]asing interventions on national data may lead a district to attach a problem it does not have or to ignore a local factor that is key to retaining teachers. (p. 69)

Though the need to better understand the costs associated with teacher turnover is well established, there are few available cost calculation instruments. Notable examples include:

- Model to measure cost of teacher turnover (Milanowski & Odden, 2007) as a subsection of the School Finance Redesign Project (SFRP)
- School Turnover Analysis (STA) – Shockley, Guglielmino, & Watlington (2006)
- Teacher Turnover Cost Calculator (TTCC) – Barnes, Crowe, & Schaefer (2007)
- Teacher Turnover Cost Model (TTCM) - Synar & Maiden (2012)
- Texas Center for Educational Research method (TCER), 2000

Approaches vary; some researchers have used industry models to estimate costs (see Synar & Maiden, 2012), whereas others have done it with district administrative data (see TCER, 2000). Regardless of method, a common theme in the literature is the challenge with doing this work reliably, due to missing data, a lack of standardization for managing costs, costs spanning different budgets, and costs borne by different entities at different levels. For example, in Barnes et al. (2007) study of teacher turnover in five distinct sites, efforts were challenged by a lack of information at the district and/or school level, with

⁸ This was our experience as well, and the challenge seems to be exacerbated in Alaska where administrator turnover is notably high (Stevens & Pierson, 2017).

only two of the five districts able to give data for school level costs, and only one able to account for all costs borne at the district level.

These inconsistencies, missing data, and a lack of standardization make cross-district comparisons extremely difficult. Levy et al. (2012) summarized the cost of teacher turnover literature:

These studies all found that differences in data systems and/or availability of data by districts and even schools within the same district influenced the kind of information that researchers were able to collect. Districts had varying abilities to extract cost data, which resulted in authors having to estimate certain costs. Variations in accounting systems, publicly available budget data, and access to administrators made comparisons across districts particularly difficult. Further, school-level turnover costs remained hidden in the unrecorded time principals and teachers spent managing teacher separations and additions within their schools. (p. 106)

This was our experience as well.

Method

The methods included a review of literature, exploration of teacher turnover and its associated costs in the Alaska context, adapting and piloting an instrument for data collection, and conducting interviews with representatives from Alaskan school districts.

Literature review

We drew from the extant literature, knowledge of school finance and administration, and teacher turnover patterns in Alaska to develop a responsive and executable method. The available instruments describe teacher turnover in three major cost categories described by Milanowski and Odden (2007): separation, replacement, and training. We broke “replacement” into two distinct categories because the activities align with different departmental and district functions: recruitment and hiring. We used Levin and McEwan’s “ingredients method” (2001) approach: first accounting for all of the “ingredients” that have value, then calculating the costs associated with them. This has been applied to cost of teacher turnover by Milanowski and Odden (2007), who looked at tasks, determined hourly breakdown of time devoted to them, and noted direct costs of those activities.

Describing teacher turnover in the Alaska context

For construct validity, around teacher turnover and its associated costs, we reached out to key stakeholders, such as the Alaska Superintendents Association and school district human resource professionals for feedback on our study design. In this process we realized that we had to do two tasks: descriptive interviews, followed by quantitative cost calculations. First, we needed to describe the workload and how districts operationalize these processes, because activities are so highly variable. The use of qualitative interview data as a mechanism for enumerating costs and activities for later quantitative analysis was employed by Levy et. al (2012) to capture the costs of turnover at the district and school levels that do not show up in budget sheets or timesheets. Though our decision to apply this process added significantly to the time and effort required to collect data, given the variability within Alaska’s 54 districts, doing the easy calculations of line item budget items would not have been a valid representation of their true activities, and would left off a lot of additional or site-specific costs.

Adapting and piloting the instrument

For data collection, we adapted the instrument developed by the Texas Center for Education Research (2000)⁹ to accommodate the unique Alaskan context that includes costs that are not relevant in many other states, such as housing or travel to communities not on a road system. We then piloted the instrument with superintendents from a few key districts to ascertain how well it worked to solicit processes and information from large/small and urban/rural districts that have different organizational structures and ways of splitting costs between school and district offices. With their inputs, the instrument was adapted accordingly for content and construct validity.

Data collection from districts

We subsequently sought to contact (by phone and email) superintendents in each of Alaska's 54 school districts, and to do this we received support from the Alaska Council of School Administrators in promoting the study and encouraging participation. We ultimately spoke to 41 superintendents and/or other district administrators (Interim Superintendents, Human Resources Directors, Assistant Superintendents, Business Managers, and Administrative Assistants) representing 37 districts.

After the interviewer documented the processes in a descriptive fashion, she used in-depth follow-up questions to break the processes into discrete tasks, and then to determine who (or who plural) was responsible, and how long each took. When possible and/or when the participant was unable to provide the detailed information, the interviewer followed up with the appropriate district staff member. Data collected during interviews provided valuable background and context for the quantitative numbers we ultimately derived, which in turn, facilitated analysis and interpretation.

Delimitations

Researcher decisions – or delimitations – are ubiquitous in research, and particularly in a project of this magnitude. The following decisions were made at the outset of this study.

District as unit of analysis

Clear distinction between district- and school-level costs has been claimed in the literature; Levy et al. (2012) note that the task distribution is variable. For example, in big districts, hiring is done at school level, and recruiting is done at district level. Meanwhile, smaller districts may do all of this at the district level, but involve school administrator. We learned these processes are highly variable in Alaska as well. We used the district as the unit of analysis, because teacher hiring and related processes (from recruitment to negotiating union contracts) most typically occur at this level.

Because our charge included estimating costs for all districts in the state, this determination was a methodological necessity; however it does exclude school-level costs, which are substantial and extremely difficult to quantify because they happen informally or with other activities. Additionally, Levy et al. (2012) note that school practices may differ significantly from one year to the next:

School-level costs are distinct from district-level costs, and vary in important ways from year to year in response to a range of contextual factors that are often unpredictable. Therefore, given the relative inaccessibility of cost data ... at the school and district levels, not only would a full accounting of its [cost of teacher turnover] require considerable time and legwork in any given

⁹ Adapted with permission from and gratitude to Texas Association of School Boards.

year, but it would also require repeating the work over several years in order to capture the variation that is known to occur. (p. 126)

Estimate turnover costs for all districts instead of a few case study schools

At the study's onset, stakeholders expressed interest in understanding the cost of teacher turnover to the state as a whole. Moreover, because districts in Alaska vary so enormously in size, structure, and business costs, as well as in the degree of teacher turnover, some stakeholders felt looking at a few districts or schools alone would not adequately reflect the costs of teacher turnover in Alaska. This decision makes our study unique; in the literature teacher turnover is typically calculated via case studies of individual districts (see Barnes et al., 2007; Texas Center for Educational Research, 2000) where researchers spend a significant amount of time observing processes, reviewing records, and interviewing personnel at different levels. Though our method accommodates the state more broadly, it is also meant limiting the breadth and precision of analysis for each district.

Exclude lost productivity costs

Though Milanowski and Odden (2007) note that while “the costs of administering the separation and hiring systems are not negligible, it is the lost human capital and the related productivity loss that should be of most concern to policy makers” (p. 18), this important cost was not a part of our charge. Doing this cost calculation would require a separate but complementary study that would employ different methods, data, and modeling. This cost could not be ascertained with our “ingredients” method.

Exclude extreme and infrequent costs

Our task was to calculate the average per-teacher turnover cost, so we limited our analysis to typical teacher turnover circumstances. However, it is important to note that infrequent turnover costs – like terminations and litigation that accompanies them – are not inconsequential. These were left out of our analysis intentionally, and primarily for validity purposes. Levy et al. (2012) note that “[t]hese costs – associated with the time needed to manage the process – are dispersed, highly variable, and very difficult to quantify” (p. 108). We found this to be true. In our early interviews, we did ask about these costs, and found that many administrators had difficulty recalling time spent on termination, mostly because these circumstances had happened several years ago and were managed by employees or administrators who had since left the district and/or were not available for interviews.

Exclude preparation costs

With the district as the unit of analysis, we also excluded the costs of teacher preparation. It is important to note that Alaska spends public funds training teachers in our university systems. Though Alaska imports nearly 64% of its new teacher hires from the lower 48 (Hill & Hirshberg, 2013), the in-state preparation costs are significant, and including these costs would be a valuable complement to the analysis we present.

Exclude community costs

Community costs were excluded from the analysis because our charge was to identify district-level costs. Additionally, superintendents were often not able to speak to these costs, which include things like having parents, elders, school board members, or community members on interview committees or in onboarding activities, particularly “culture camps.” Some of this time is volunteered; sometimes it is compensated. Because we were unable to collect these costs reliably (and they are often not district costs), they are excluded from the analysis.

Exclude contracted services

When districts contract their administrative processes (most commonly separation's administrative tasks such as final payroll, COBRA notification, or technology updates in smaller districts), we noted these as contracted expenses, but were not able to separate turnover costs from the broader agreements. For these tasks, we note that districts do the processes administratively, but did not estimate costs for these activities; thus the costs of these activities may differ significantly in districts where these tasks are contracted.

Other excluded costs

We also identified some tasks that we did not include, either because they came up during the ongoing literature review or in the qualitative data collection after the instrument was piloted. These include the cost of reworking schedules (see Levy et al., 2012), which would be an administrative cost in the separation process, and compliance with EEO systems and HR policies (see Levy et al., 2012), which would be costs to both separation and hiring.

Analysis

In our data collection and analysis, we experienced many of the same challenges that other researchers have described. For some of the more standard and uniform tasks, such as reference checks in the hiring process which are done in all districts and have a clear protocol, our averages included data from all participating districts. For other tasks, such as job fair participation, which varies considerably even within individual districts, spotty data rendered us unable to calculate a reliable average cost. Though there are limits in the dataset, the calculations are comprised with input from 69% of Alaska's districts, and provides a valuable starting point for analysis.

Coding process

Using an axial coding process (Saldaña, 2015), two researchers coded a set of the interviews together, breaking each of the four major cost categories into individual tasks and noting the personnel costs (time and wage) as well as material costs associated with each category. Working together, they talked through the tasks and activities, establishing inter-rater reliability and consistently developing a codebook and set of definitions for the tasks. Then the codebook and definitions were used so that the two researchers could code the remainder of the interviews independently.

Estimating time

Far more districts were able to reliably describe their process than indicate the amount of time spent on it, and cost calculations required some estimation:

- When a time range was given (e.g., 2-3 hours), we took the middle (2.5 hours) for calculations.
- When the range provided was too broad (e.g., "less than a day" or "a couple hours") we coded these responses as missing data.
- If a respondent told us that a task takes a certain amount of time per applicant, we multiplied that by the average number of applicants per position in the district, using data provided by interviewees, to calculate the per-position cost.
- If a respondent told us how much time the district spends on the whole process (for all positions), we divided that by the number of teachers who left (created vacancies) to calculate the per-position costs.

- If a respondent bundled processes (e.g., applications screening and interviews combined take 10 hours per position), we divided the total time by the number of tasks and distributed it evenly (in this case, 5 hours in each task).

Coding staff

The interviews also solicited the person responsible for performing each task:

- If the respondent told us an employee *sometimes* participated in the process, we coded that as 0.5 of the employee, suggesting that this happens half of the time.
- When a respondent told us that a particular employee *usually* does something (but it *sometimes* was done by another employee or position) we coded the usual employee.
- When a task was done by one position *or* another (either/or), we named both and later averaged the hourly wages of the two positions and used that as the multiplier when calculating wage.
- Because the positions were later used to calculate wages, we developed uniform codes (position names) for common positions. These were checked for accuracy by a third party at the Institute of Social and Economic Research who has familiarity in state and school district data systems. The codes are presented in Appendix B.

Estimating wage

Our original intent was to calculate costs using actual wages as reported by the district, however we were unable to consistently get enough data to calculate averages, and we were sometimes unclear whether reported wages also included benefits. Thus we estimated an average wage for every coded position.¹⁰ To do this:

- We used actual reported wages from the Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB) *Alaska Public School Classified Employee 2014-2015 Salary & Benefits Report* where possible.
- When it was not possible to use AASB data, we estimated wages using the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Alaska Local and Regional Information (ALARI) data, which is supplied publicly by the Research and Analysis Division.
- For teacher wages, we used data supplied by the National Education Association-Alaska (NEA Alaska). These data were robust enough to provide contract days, thus we were able to calculate hourly wages for salaried teacher positions using an 8 hour/day estimate.

From each of these datasets and for each position, we calculated mean hourly wage, which does not include benefits. For consistency, we deferred to calculated wages even when districts reported actual wages. However, when we compared reported wages with our estimates, our estimates were fairly on par (if not a slight underestimate) with the actuals reported.

When respondents stated that school personnel who participated in the hiring processes were volunteers (most typically this was other teachers), we followed Milanowski and Odden's (2007) method

¹⁰ Districts were extremely helpful in providing these data and the lack of wage data does not reflect a lack of participation or cooperation. Average wages were used in all cost calculations because we were able to access high-quality salary data from a variety of sources for which averages could be reliably calculated. This allowed us to expand the number of districts in the dataset to those for which we had time and position data, which was more complete than wage data in the district interviews.

and recommendation to calculate this cost as teacher wages. There are two reasons for this. First, if teachers volunteer their time as part of any of these activities, they cannot be considered costless, because the teachers would otherwise be using that time to make other meaningful contributions at their schools. Additionally, we note that significant teacher workloads (exacerbated by volunteer activities in the school) contributes to teacher burnout (Arens & Morin, 2016). Thus, we calculated time and wage, but the costs are probably not monetary alone.

Estimating fixed costs

When the district had a fixed cost for something exclusive to teacher turnover (like software), we divided the annual material cost by the number of vacancies to get the per-position cost. If there was no turnover in the district that year but the district nonetheless had to maintain the system, the denominator was 1. If the unit was not provided for a per-person cost, we defaulted to one per teaching position. For example, formal background checks are charged per inquiry per person. We assumed that the district would want to minimize costs and perform these only on the finalist.

Calculating total cost

Our original intent was to get complete data so we could crosstab or further drill down turnover costs by turnover rate or other district characteristics. Unfortunately, we were unable to do this because we had too small a number to do quartiles, data were too incomplete to get the actual complete cost for any single district, there were no natural breaks in the turnover rates to make these distinctions, and there are not optimal turnover levels established in the literature. Also, turnover rates can vary significantly year-to-year, particularly in small districts. On the positive side, the data were complete enough to identify common tasks, note the number of districts performing the task as part of the teacher turnover process, and calculate the average time, wage cost, and fixed cost per teaching position. Using the number of districts that do the task divided by the number of districts that we had data for which the task applies,¹¹ we were able to weight the activities and use that as a multiplier to create a statewide average. The statewide per-task was calculated by the following formula:

$$CTT = \frac{\text{No. of districts performing the task}}{\text{No. of districts not doing task at all or as part of teacher turnover} + \text{No. of districts performing the task}} \times \text{Average wage cost of task}$$

These calculations are presented in table 1 and further detailed in Appendix A.

Considerations for interpreting data

Given our experience in the process and how our work aligns with the literature, we offer the following considerations for readers:

- Because of the intricacies and until some process of accounting for teacher turnover is standardized, costs cannot be compared across districts or states, except in general and broad terms (Levy et al., 2012).
- The tasks and personnel performing them are highly variable even at the individual district, school, or worker level (Levy et al., 2012), thus our calculation should be only considered as representing “the typical case.”

¹¹ These are not weighted by the number of teaching positions available in the district (meaning the proportional number of *teachers* to which these costs apply), but instead to the number of *districts*.

- Some things presented as costs (e.g., training new hires) may help reduce turnover in long run. As Barnes et al. (2007) noted,

A high cost per turnover is not necessarily bad, and a low cost per turnover is not necessarily good. A district that invests heavily in teacher training and support will probably have a high cost per turnover – even when the investment lowers its overall turnover rate and, we hope, turnover costs. This is due to the fact that the investments in teaching quality add to the total costs of turnover while also reducing the number of turnovers. (p. 82)

Findings

Our analysis allowed us to make a conservative estimate of turnover costs. Levy et al. (2012) summarized our experience:

Consistent with prior research, the [cost of teacher turnover] model could not be easily or fully applied at the district level, where the component costs of teacher turnover were scattered between different departmental budgets and typically not identified by task. Nor could it be fully applied at the school level, where teacher replacement and PD costs were undocumented. As a result of these challenges, we have most likely presented underestimates of the real cost of teacher turnover. Nevertheless, applying the methodology...specified the explicit and some of the hidden costs of teacher turnover at both the district and school levels based on data about staff responsibilities, and the time, materials, and resources spent on turnover activities. (p. 125)

Our calculations find that the total weighted average cost of teacher turnover is \$20,431.08 per teacher for the costs we calculated. Again, these numbers reflect typical circumstances. Average costs by category are detailed in table 1.

Separation

We estimate the cost of separation, excluding housing, is \$194, and accounts for less than 1% of the total per teacher turnover cost, mirroring what other researchers have found (see Levy et al., 2012; Synar & Maiden, 2012). This is probably the most aligned set of processes across districts, and the category for which we had the most complete data. The processes are also the same for all teacher types – SPED, secondary, or elementary educators all generally have the same separation processes and costs, though some tasks in this category are contracted out by some districts. Variation in this category includes whether or not districts conduct interviews or provide teacher housing. Housing accounts for 11% of the average cost of teacher turnover; averaged across the state, this is \$2,254. Looking only at districts that provide it, we estimate that housing maintenance when a teacher separates averages \$4,035, which includes both wages for maintenance personnel and material costs (e.g., paint, carpeting, locks).¹²

¹² The manner in which teachers leave also may affect this category. Though we calculated costs for typical circumstances of teachers leaving at the end of their contract year, teachers who leave in middle of year may do so for differing reasons – personal (by choice, or for involuntarily reasons like health), transfers of military spouse, or removal. These circumstances are infrequent, but the costs are often substantial. However, programs designed to reduce teacher turnover rates generally cannot account for these circumstances. Additionally, cases of involuntary

Table 1

District-level teacher turnover expenditures by cost category

	Separation	Recruitment	Hiring	Orientation & training	Performance productivity	Preparation
Our per-teacher cost calculation	\$2,448.95	\$1,910.35*	\$4,901.91	\$11,169.86	(not calculated)	(not calculated)
Percent of our total cost calculation	11.99%	9.35%	23.99%	54.67%	.	.
Estimate includes	Administrative, maintenance, and security tasks	Job fairs, advertising	Screening applicants, interviews, and administrative processes	Professional development, onboarding, and new teacher support	.	.
Our total calculated cost: \$20,431.08						
<p><i>Our analysis calculated the district-level cost of teacher turnover in four categories. A full listing of all activities and costs in each category is detailed in Appendix A.</i></p> <p><i>*We gathered insufficient data to calculate wages for recruitment, but accommodated all wage and material costs in the separation, hiring, and orientation & training categories. All cost calculations exclude benefits, which vary considerably between districts; author analysis of AASB data noted that these typically add 40-50% to wage costs.</i></p>						

Recruitment

Our calculations in this category include only the fixed costs of job fair travel and registration expenses, but do not include wages associated with tending to these activities.¹³ Fixed costs are not inconsequential, averaging \$1,910 per teacher or 9.35% of the costs we were able to account for. Fifty-six percent of districts participating in our study reported going to at least one job fair; the Alaska Teacher Placement (ATP) website reports that over 40 districts regularly participate in the Anchorage job fair.

Though we were unable to calculate wage costs due to insufficient data, our data allow us to provide some descriptive information. Districts send an average of 2.96 representatives to the Anchorage job fair, and 3.13 people to out-of-state fairs; each fair consumes several days' time. Attendees are most commonly the superintendent and principal(s); other personnel may include recruitment specialists, human resources directors, teachers, school board members, parents or community members or elders.

In spite of this significant cost and that some hires are made there, a consistent theme among the superintendents was that job fairs are declining in usefulness – especially in Anchorage – because of low

removal tend to be private, and information about the circumstances or frequency is difficult to obtain. We acknowledge these circumstances even though we are unable to incorporate them in the analysis.

¹³ Recruitment was the only cost category we intended to calculate yet are unable to fully report with the data we collected.

participation from teacher candidates. In addition to job fairs, the interview data reveal that districts are recruiting on relationships, drawing on both in-state and out-of-state networks.

Beyond individual district efforts, additional recruiting is provided through ATP, which sends representation to Montana, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Kansas, and several national conferences to recruit on behalf of Alaska Districts. Though these costs are beyond the scope of our study, and district participation in the ATP network is calculated at a per-teacher cost (see Appendix A), the state makes additional expenditures beyond district investment to support this teacher turnover activity.

Hiring

We estimate that hiring costs are about one fourth of the cost of teacher turnover. Many activities in the hiring process are consistent across districts. They all screen applications, conduct interviews, and engage in various administrative processes around selecting teacher candidates. All districts use the Alaska Teacher Placement (ATP) system and program to screen applicants, and most use committees to select suitable candidates, though in some districts this is done by principals and superintendents independently, or at job fairs. Superintendents in rural districts noted the importance of verifying candidates' interest; they spend a lot of time talking to applicants to help them understand the district and community to which they have applied, and to ascertain "fit." No districts provide travel to interviews as a routine cost, which means many teachers accept jobs having never visited the community (or even the state).

Housing also is an important and sometimes considerable cost in the hiring process, because many districts – even though they do not provide housing – have to assist teachers in finding it. Housing searches take districts an average of 4.14 hours, or \$178 per position – in most cases involving superintendents or principals, and some superintendents described significant time investments in this process.

Another significant cost in the hiring process was helping teachers to navigate the Alaska teacher certification process. Most districts do this; 21 out of 25 that provided data on this task noted it as a cost of teacher turnover, with an average time of 4.56 hours and cost of \$201 per teacher.

Orientation and training

This was the most difficult set of costs for us to calculate as well as the most variable between districts. Overall, it accounts for more than half of the costs we calculated. Orientation activities differ significantly in scope, as well as in what individual districts provide. They range from procedural training like using district software or curriculum, to more intensive PD around pedagogy and cultural orientations. The amount of volunteers who participate in this process again means a significant underestimate of the total cost – and is a hidden cost on communities.

We were conservative in our estimates, calculating only orientation and training that is specific to new teachers and excluding PD that is routinely provided to all teaching staff. We also limited our calculations to only the teachers' first year of service, though many districts provide ongoing support to new teachers for several years.

Orientation and training costs also extend well beyond our unit of analysis (the school district) and are borne at different levels of the system. First, much of ongoing orientation and mentoring happens at school level, which is a cost both in actual dollars as well as the tax on senior teachers' time and

energies. Additionally, the Alaska Statewide Mentor Project (ASMP) which has operated since 2004, provides induction and mentoring for first- and second-year teachers across Alaska (Alaska Statewide Mentor Project, 2017). Though the funding source for the program has changed since its inception and has included federal grants and state legislative appropriations, it is currently supported by University of Alaska general funds, at amounts ranging from 1.5 million to \$750,000 year (Steve Atwater and Glenda Findlay, personal conversation, Feb 28, 2017). Also, and as noted in the literature, many of the districts rely on external grant funding for their orientation and training activities, which may reduce direct district costs, but often do not provide for sustainable programs. Additionally, table 2 summarizes additional costs excluded from our calculations and, where data are available, some values from additional data sources or the literature.

Table 2

Additional costs of teacher turnover not represented in our analysis

	School-level costs	District-level costs	State costs	Teacher costs	Community costs
Separation	Impact on schedules and school climate	Terminations, teachers leaving mid-year, contracted services			
Recruitment			\$110,000/year^a (as per Alaska Teacher Placement)		
Hiring	Teachers and principals serve in hiring process				Elders and parents serve on hiring committees
Orientation & training	Senior teachers and principals mentor new hires		\$750,000/year^a (as per Alaska Statewide Mentoring Program)		Community contribution to help teachers settle in.
Performance productivity	40.92% of turnover costs ^b				
Preparation			\$55,912^d/4-year degree	\$25,822^c/4-year degree	
<p><i>This table notes additional costs of teacher turnover not included in our analysis, and how other researchers or sources have estimated some of these expenditures.</i></p> <p>^aUniversity of Alaska FY17 budget</p> <p>^bSynar & Maiden, 2012</p> <p>^cNational Center for Education Statistics Multiyear Tuition Calculator, 2017</p> <p>^dState Higher Education Executive Officers, 2015</p>					

Implications

The study findings have implications for how we conceptualize teacher turnover, how we calculate it, and how we seek to address it.

The cost of teacher turnover is considerable.

Our analysis provides a conservative estimate for the average cost of teacher turnover in four cost categories. We calculated costs using the district as the unit of analysis, but direct costs are also borne by schools, communities, and the state. There are additional costs to Alaska from impacts on teacher preparation and student achievement. Even with conservative estimates (excluding, for example additional costs associated with teachers leaving mid-year), the direct expenditures and impacts on students and communities are significant, and divert dollars that could otherwise be invested in teaching and learning.

Not all turnover is bad, nor are all turnover costs.

Some teacher turnover is beneficial – teachers leave the profession if it is not a good “fit,” some take other positions in education, and retirement is indicative of stability. Mentoring and induction activities that are resource-intensive up front promote teaching effectiveness and long-term retention, which ultimately save costs.

Retention pays off.

Retaining teachers over time not only promotes instructional quality, but saves direct turnover costs, allowing districts to reallocate funds to teaching and learning.

Reducing costs in one area may create additional costs elsewhere.

As districts seek to manage costs of turnover through budget revisions, they should be mindful that reducing expenditures in one area may incur costs at other levels of the education system. As Levy et al. (2012) note,

School-level COT is a particularly relevant issue given the layoffs and staffing adjustments that many districts are making in response to dwindling resources. If districts account for only the savings they realize when reducing their workforce, they miss the very real costs to schools[.] ... This is especially pertinent as districts seek to reduce their teacher workforce through lay-offs, managing attrition, and re-assignments. (p. 126)

Thus efforts and activities aimed at saving should consider costs at other levels of the education system that may be unintentionally impacted.

Recommendations

Our recommendations focus on policies, practice, and research that can reduce teacher turnover, reduce turnover costs, and help us to better understand the phenomenon. Ultimately, the goal of these recommendations is to retain high-quality teachers, thus serving Alaskan students and communities.

Better track teacher turnover costs at multiple levels.

Our research revealed significant opportunities to better describe and track the costs of teacher turnover broadly, both for future research and for policy and practice applications. Levy et al. (2012) implored, “if districts are to understand and control the costs associated with teacher turnover, tracking these costs must become a systematic and transparent process. Moreover, tracking costs at the district level along will undermine the total [turnover costs]” (p. 126). Researchers recommend this be done annually, and data systems need updating so key data can collect and systematized to make these

processes more accurate (Barnes et al., 2007; Watlington et al., 2010), for both districts and schools (Guin, 2004).

Explore how to reduce costs.

Reducing the direct costs of teacher turnover is an opportunity for the state and for districts (Boe et al., 2008), though many costs of turnover can be regarded as investments in long-term retention. Our analysis suggests the state may have an opportunity to be more efficient in some district-level administrative processes, but these are typically tailored to district needs, and are not high costs relative to others identified in our analysis. At the community level, improvements in housing could save significant time; at the state level, efficiencies in the teacher licensure process may save costs for districts that support teachers in navigating them. At the district level, we recommend that superintendents maintain autonomy to structure systems and process that best suit their needs.

Support ongoing research around teacher turnover and its associated costs.

Recommendations for research stemming from our work – and building on the recommendations of other scholars – include:

- **Better describing the patterns of teacher turnover;** for example, when we report turnover rates in Alaska, additional research should explore how those numbers differ across schools, communities, or positions (Guin, 2004).
- **Exploring the costs of teacher turnover that are non-monetary,** including the impacts on schools as organizations and how they function (Guin, 2004).
- **Measuring teacher productivity losses** and the costs of educational interventions or policy changes.
- **Exploring the impact of different district or school characteristics on turnover** “to see what effects district characteristics such as size, degree of decentralization, student achievement, wealth, and location have on turnover costs” (Milanowski & Odden, 2007, p. 19). This requires finding a way to standardize the data collection while maintaining robust recognition of difference.

Explore conditions driving high teacher turnover, and how to address them.

Given the magnitude of associated costs, understanding addressing the reasons for teacher turnover has the potential for significant savings. Fewer than half of the districts participating in our study conduct exit interviews with departing teachers. Our data do not suggest that doing interviews correlates with lower turnover (and administrators in smaller districts often know why their staff leave) but the data are not recorded systematically. To the extent that these data can illuminate reasons teachers are leaving, and potential ways to lessen turnover, we recommend that districts implement mechanisms to record and track turnover patterns over time. These mechanisms will need to consider the realities are harsh truths about teacher turnover patterns, particularly in low-income, rural, and difficult-to-staff districts. As Guin (2004) noted,

Broad policies aimed at improving teacher quality are not likely to be successful if they ignore the reality of teacher turnover. If teachers continue to use low-performing schools as a point of entry into a district, but leave them as soon as they gain even a little seniority, the schools and the students in them will continue to suffer. School districts that try to fix low performing

schools through professional development alone may be disappointed since teachers leave these schools after acquiring new skills. (p. 21)

Our literature review and interviews with districts identified areas of promise: increasing the Alaska-prepared teacher supply, improving teacher supports, and recruiting on community strengths.

Increase Alaska-prepared teacher supply.

Analysis of teacher turnover in Alaska notes that teachers who are prepared in Alaska are retained longer in their positions and in the state (Hill & Hirshberg, 2013), thus increasing this teacher supply would reduce turnover (and save turnover costs). There is an opportunity to increase supply by limiting barriers to teacher mobility that inhibit transfer between Alaska districts, as well an opportunity to increase enrollments incrementally in Alaska's teacher preparation programs, which emphasize cultural competency specific and appropriate to Alaska populations (Cope & Germuth, 2012).

Improve teacher supports.

The broader literature on teacher turnover, as well as studies conducted specifically in Alaska, underscore the value and importance of supporting new teachers. Levy et al. (2012) note that investing in teacher support is aligned with lower turnover rates, and in particular, school-level supports increase retention (Berry, Daughtrey, & Wieder, 2010). Smith and Ingersoll (2004) note that a good induction program can decrease teacher turnover by as much as 50%, and Barnes et al. (2007) recommend that comprehensive retention strategies should especially target at-risk schools.

In Alaska, Cope and Germuth (2012) documented that new teachers wished they had a local, community mentor for support, and Hirshberg et al. (2016) noted lack of professional support correlated with teachers' decision to leave rural districts. Cope and Germuth (2012) showed that following a carefully managed set of cultural experiences including a summer immersion, followed by ongoing local cultural mentorship and a university-level course taught by an Alaska Native instructor both improve teacher self-assessments and perseverance.

Supporting teachers also means supporting administrators (Barnes et al., 2007; Watlington et al., 2010). Given the correlation between teacher turnover and their perception of administrator support, administrators will also need resources, autonomy, skills, and community assistance to provide this support to teachers.

Recruit on community strengths.

Research in Alaska has also explored factors contributing to teacher retention – not just turnover. Cope and Germuth's (2012) research notes that teachers who choose to stay in rural Alaska like the opportunity to work with small classes, getting to know students and families more intimately in small communities, and feeling that they were making a difference in the lives of their students. Teachers also said they were drawn to Alaska for compensation, more opportunities, and adventure. Districts are recruiting by underscoring these characteristics and seeking these attributes, and our data suggest that these efforts are effective and valuable.

Limitations

The difficulty in calculating these costs cannot be overstated. Other researchers in the peer-reviewed literature note, "all of these methods are best guesses, and none make the effort to calculate actual costs of teacher turnover exclusively for school districts, especially since the costs of teacher turnover

can vary greatly from one district to another” (Watlington, 2010, p. 27). In consideration of these challenges, and though our data were collected with integrity and we are confident in our analysis, the study presents some significant limitations in addition to those noted in the method and delimitations.

First, though we weighted the cost of teacher turnover using average costs at the district level, the costs of turnover are highly variable (Milanowski & Odden, 2007). These variations include hiring in-state versus hiring from out of state; hiring new teachers versus returning teachers who bring skill and experience; hiring teachers from different content areas; and variable turnover rates for different schools, positions, or teacher characteristics – even within the same district. Our method was not precise enough to parse out these differences.

Additionally, using the district as our unit of analysis was both our charge and aligned our study methodologically with other research in this field. Though the line between school and district is clear in the literature, in many places in Alaska – particularly its rural school districts - the line between district and school is blurred.

Next, because we were conservative in our estimates, defaulting to the lower cost or assumption when presented with decisions, the numbers we present are low-end estimates of the total cost of teacher turnover. Particularly in the area of orientation and training, our calculations include only the cost of first-year induction, but Milanowski and Odden (2007) argue that, even when estimates do not count performance productivity losses to student learning, it is more appropriate to calculate training and mentoring for five-year post-hire, to bring new teachers up to a more experienced level.

Though we encountered challenges in data collection and analysis were, they were also revelatory. We echo Milanowski and Odden (2007), who said of their own work,

This study has also illuminated a number of interesting complexities in estimating the cost of teacher turnover. First, it is clear that estimating the costs of training and lost productivity are not as straightforward as estimating administrative costs and requires the use of assumptions that are arguable. (p. 18)

Because there is not a validated instrument for calculating teacher turnover, we cannot compare these costs to other states. The work of other researchers illuminates our understanding, but because other estimates for the cost of teacher turnover have been calculated using different instruments, even when numbers are available, comparisons can only be made in the most general sense. To that end, we also have to consider the shelf life of the data; already as we finalize the report, the data are nearly 18 months old, and this time lapse fails to account for inflation or changed circumstances or processes in the districts themselves.

Conclusions

The costs of teacher turnover considerable, and reducing teacher turnover – particularly for new teachers in their first five years who in their highest rate of productivity growth, earning relatively lower salaries, and at highest risk for turnover – is an opportunity for Alaska. Zero teacher turnover is neither practical nor desirable, from a cost or an educational perspective. However, we can do better, and this report identifies some opportunities.

This research also highlighted the multifaceted nature of teacher supply and demand. The reasons teachers stay – or go – are complex, and cannot be solved at one level or by one initiative. Rather, changing teacher turnover (and reducing the costs associated with it) will require enhanced cooperation and innovative policies. We look forward to supporting those efforts.

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Appendix A: Detail costs of teacher turnover

Activity	% of Districts doing CTT tasks	Time average (hours)	Wage cost average (\$)	Material cost average (\$)	Weighted cost (\$)
SEPARATION					
COBRA notifications	95.83	0.76	30.84	.	29.56
Database updates	85.19	0.45	16.63	.	14.17
Exit interviews	47.22	1.57	88.56	.	41.82
Final benefits	96.77	0.48	17.98	.	17.4
Final payroll	93.75	0.51	18.84	.	17.66
Housing maintenance	55.88	22.4	1,088.00	2,947	2,254.85
Leave payout	82.61	0.33	14.47	.	11.95
Other administrative costs	29.17	0.54	8.64	.	2.52
Retirement processing	34.48	0.48	16.89	.	5.82
Security	82.14	0.35	15.93	.	13.09
Technology updates	88	0.69	31.22	.	27.47
Website updates	76.92	0.44	16.43	.	12.64
RECRUITMENT					
Advertising	82.76	.	0	242	200.28
Job fair registration & materials	47.06	.	0	1,254.00	590.12
Job fair travel	66.67	.	0	1,679.93	1,119.95
HIRING					
Alaska Teacher Placement (ATP) services	100	.	0	785.93	785.93
Applications pre-screening	92	9.11	395.82	.	364.15
Benefit processing	96.3	0.69	28.75	.	27.69
Bonus	15.63	.	0	2,000.00	312.5
Computer account setup	95.65	0.71	31.81	.	30.43
Contract preparation	100	1.41	67.12	.	67.12
Email setup	96	0.34	16.42	.	15.76
Establish payroll	92.31	0.75	28.57	.	26.37
Formal background check	54.55	.	209.94	373	317.97
"Highly Qualified Teacher" Status ¹³	70.83	0.68	26.05	.	18.45
Housing searches	62.96	4.14	178	.	112.07
Identify candidates for interviews	76.67	24.53	551.5	.	422.82
Informal background check	33.33	0.48	17.54	.	5.85
Interview preparation	92	4.2	200.42	.	184.39
Interviews	100	10.03	768.56	.	768.56
Moving	24.24	.	0	1,513.00	366.79
Navigate certification process	80.77	4.56	200.55	.	161.98
Other hiring costs	16.13	1	52.32	.	8.44
Other post-hire task	40	2.8	175.63	.	70.25
Other selection tasks	86.67	2.52	101.54	.	88
Phone book updates	54.55	0.22	6.22	.	3.39
Reference checks	100	6.7	368.67	.	368.67
School board approval	91.67	0.869	50.78	.	46.55
Security	84	0.49	21.51	.	18.07
Stipend	9.68	.	0	2,000.00	193.55
Transcript review	100	0.93	31.54	.	31.54
Travel	20	.	0	.	0
Verify interest	100	1.03	60.45	.	60.45
Website updates	79.17	0.9	30.54	.	24.18
ORIENTATION & TRAINING					
District-sponsored PD	46.43	.	1,845.00	7,213.00	4,205.50
Mentorship	74.07	120	2,800.00	.	2,074.07
Orientation activities	96.88	45.25	837.89	3,480.00	4,182.96
Praxis fees	60	.	0	870	522
Substitute for district-sponsored PD	40	.	0	448.63	179.45
Tuition benefits	11.76	.	0	50	5.88

¹³ Under new regulations in the 2015 rewrite of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (formerly *No Child No Child Left Behind* now *Every Student Succeeds Act*) districts are no longer required to document highly qualified teacher (HQT) status for teachers hired for the 2016-2017 school year. <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/faq/essa-faqs.pdf>.

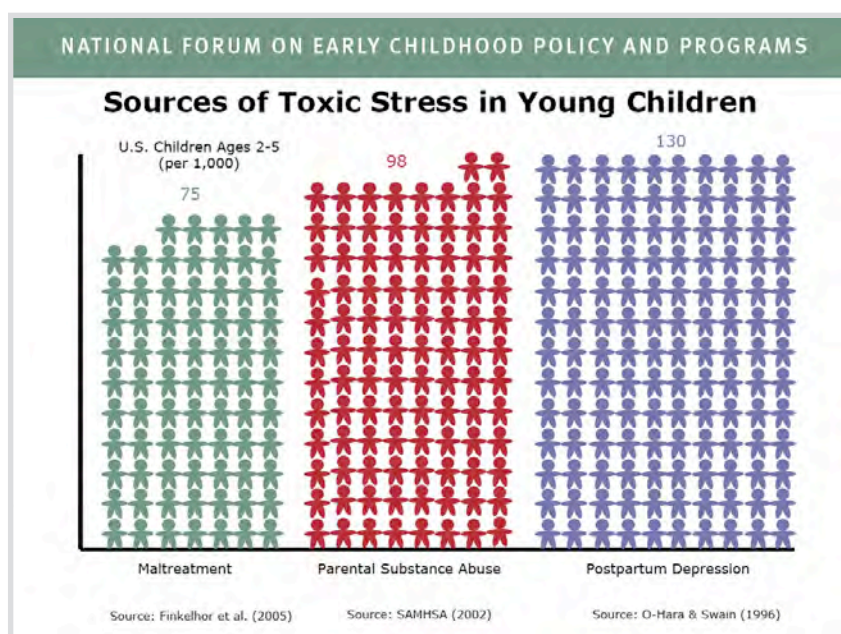
Appendix B: Occupation codes & wages used for cost calculations

Occupation	Alternate position names supplied by districts	Mean Wage	Wage Source
Accountant	Payroll Accountant, Payroll Manager, Bookkeeper	38.93	ALARI
Administrative Assistant	Secretary, Administrative Secretary, Point Person, Data Manager	17.93	ALARI
Assistant Principal	Academic Principal, Supervisor, Building Administrator	40.50	AASB
Assistant Superintendent	.	56.77	AASB
Board Secretary	Superintendent's Administrative Assistant, District Secretary	27.6	ALARI
Classified Staff	Staff Member	19.50	AASB
Curriculum Director	.	47.59	AASB
Director	Training Director, KID Coordinator	42.56	ALARI
Facility Coordinator	Special Manager for Leases & Operations, Facility Director	43.65	AASB
HR Manager	HR Supervisor, Executive Director of Staffing and Operations, HR Officer, Benefits Manager, Benefits Coordinator, HR Director, Personnel Director, Staffing and Operation Coordinator, EEO Director	53.86	ALARI
HR Specialist	HR staff, Personnel person, HR, Senior HR Technician, Leave Specialist, Benefits Specialist, Personnel Officer	22.25	ALARI
Information Technologist	Tech Coordinator, Tech Department, Technology Specialist, Computer Technician, Tech Guy, Tech Facilitator, Tech Engineer, IT	39.52	ALARI
Maintenance Director	Maintenance Manager	43.80	AASB
Payroll Clerk	Payroll Technician, Payroll Specialist, Payroll Person, Payroll	23.24	ALARI
Principal	Head Teacher, Building Principal, Site Administrator	51.25	AASB
Recruitment Specialist	Communication Coordinator	31.77	ALARI
School Business Officer	Business Manager, Business Officer, Comptroller, Business Office Manager	40.50	AASB
Site Maintenance Person	Custodian, Maintenance, Cleaning Crew	16.05	ALARI
Superintendent	.	58.97	AASB
Teacher	Mentor/Counselor, Tech Teacher	44.15	NEA Alaska
Tech Director	IT Manager	57.47	ALARI

A series of brief summaries of the scientific presentations at the National Symposium on Early Childhood Science and Policy.

By creating and implementing effective early childhood programs and policies, society can ensure that children have a solid foundation for a **productive future**. Four decades of evaluation research have identified innovative programs that can improve a wide range of outcomes with continued impact into the adult years. Effective interventions are grounded in neuroscience and child development research and guided by evidence regarding what works for what purpose. With careful attention to quality and continuous improvement, such programs can be cost-effective and produce positive outcomes for children.

1 Effective services build supportive relationships and stimulating environments. To develop strong brain architecture, babies and toddlers require dependable interaction with nurturing adults and safe environments to explore. Toxic stress (see InBrief: The Impact of Early Adversity on Brain Development) can damage that architecture, but programs in a variety of settings—the home, early care and education, foster care, and other environments—can protect children from the effects of toxic stress by providing stable relationships with responsive caregivers. Within the context of these relationships, programs must



Providing supportive relationships and safe environments can improve outcomes for all children, but especially those who are most vulnerable. Between 75 and 130 of every 1,000 U.S. children under age 5 live in homes where at least one of three common precipitants of toxic stress could negatively affect their development.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- The development and retention of a skilled early childhood workforce is critical for success. Across all agencies and programs, a workforce that is appropriately skilled, trained, and compensated is a major contributor to achieving the best possible child and family outcomes. Ongoing investment in workforce skills and professional development is essential for program improvement.
- Quality of implementation is key. Model programs can lose their impact if not brought to scale correctly. Rigorous program standards, ongoing training and technical assistance, and continual quality assessment and improvement are critical to ensuring the ongoing effectiveness of large-scale programs.
- A multi-strategy approach will best enable states to ensure healthy futures for children. No single program can meet the diverse developmental needs of all children. A more promising approach targets a range of needs with a continuum of services that have documented effectiveness.

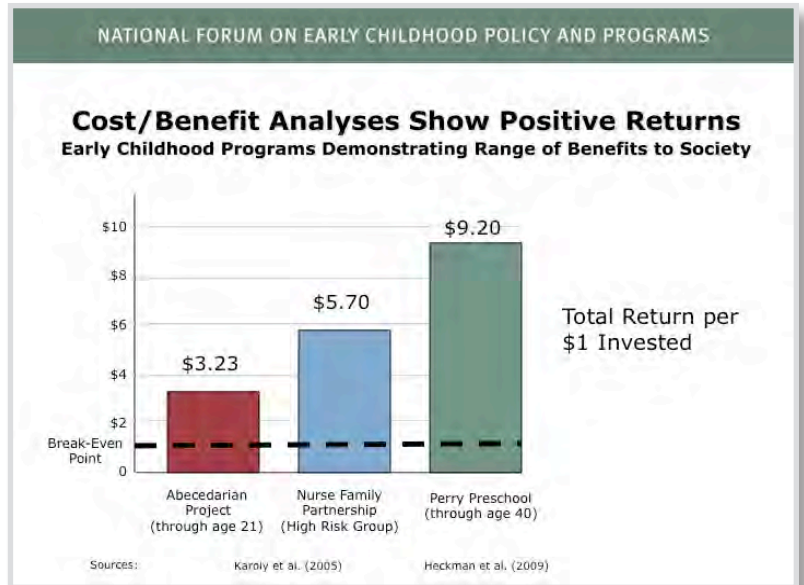
support emotional, social, and cognitive development because they are inextricably intertwined in the brain. We can't do one without the other.

2 Effective interventions address specific developmental challenges. Decades of brain science and developmental research suggest a three-tiered approach to ensure the health and well-being of young children:

- Tier 1 covers the basics — the health services, stable, responsible caregiving, and safe environments that all children need to help them build and sustain strong brains and bodies.
- Tier 2 includes broadly targeted interventions for children and families in poverty. Programs that combine effective center-based care and education for children with services for parents, such as education or income supports, can have positive effects on families and increase the likelihood that children will be prepared to succeed in school.
- Tier 3 provides specialized services for children and families who are most likely to experience toxic stress. Specific, effective treatments, such as interventions and services for child maltreatment, mental health, or substance abuse, can show positive outcomes for children and parents and benefits to society that exceed program costs.

3 Effectiveness factors distinguish programs that work from those that don't. Evaluation science helps identify the characteristics of successful programs, known as effectiveness factors. In early care and education, for example, the effectiveness factors that have been shown by multiple studies to improve outcomes for children include:

- Qualified and appropriately compensated personnel
- Small group sizes and high adult-child ratios
- Language-rich environment



Three rigorously studied early childhood programs, the Perry Preschool Project, the Abecedarian project, and the Nurse Family Partnership, show a range of sizable returns to the participants and to the public for every dollar invested.

- Developmentally appropriate “curriculum”
- Safe physical setting
- Warm and responsive adult-child interactions

4 Effective early childhood programs generate benefits to society that far exceed program costs. Responsible investments focus on effective programs that are staffed appropriately, implemented well, and improved continuously. Extensive analysis by economists has shown that education and development investments in the earliest years of life produce the greatest returns. Most of those returns, which can range from \$4 to \$9 per dollar invested, benefit the community through reduced crime, welfare, and educational remediation, as well as increased tax revenues on higher incomes for the participants of early childhood programs when they reach adulthood.

For more information, see “A Science-Based Framework for Early Childhood Policy” and Working Papers from the National Forum on Early Childhood Policy and Programs.

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Transforming Schools:

A Framework for Trauma-Engaged Practice in Alaska



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As Alaskans we are **resilient** and on the cutting edge of transforming schools together by supporting the whole student and integrating trauma engaged practices. This framework brings together lessons learned by school staff and community members within Alaska while integrating school-wide trauma-engaged approach to improve academic outcomes and well-being for all students. Using stories, research, and best practices, this resource is designed for use by school-community teams seeking to make our schools a place of positive transformation and significant learning for each student.

INTRODUCTION



*“Understanding my students’ stories has helped us both
to be more successful”* –Alaska educator

SUMMARY Understanding the effects of childhood trauma transforms our understanding of what our students need to succeed, and enables schools to help break rather than perpetuate the cycle of trauma.

In Our Schools: A Small Change with Deep Implications

Imagine standing just inside the front door of an elementary school at the start of a wintry Alaskan day. It’s dark and cold outside and each time a child comes in the wind blows just a little bit of snow in with them. Most of the children pass through the doors and go on to their classrooms; some stop to get breakfast if they haven’t eaten. At 8 a.m. sharp, a bell rings, signifying the start of school. A few children continue to arrive, late for school...

COMMON PRACTICE A few children continue to arrive after 8:00 am – late for school. The front office staff tells the children to line up – sometimes they are backed up out the door – while tardy slips are prepared for each child. It takes a few minutes to wait in line for a tardy slip and then it’s off to class with no time to get breakfast if they didn’t get it at home. The child has to take the tardy slip to class and present it to the teacher in front of her peers.

TRANSFORMATIVE PRACTICE A few children continue to arrive after 8:00 am – late for school. The front office staff greets each child: “I’m so happy you’re here. Have you had breakfast?” If not, the student heads down the hall to get a quick breakfast. The children go to class without a tardy slip and are greeted warmly by the teacher and integrated into the classroom activities.

A Change in Thinking

Tardy slips are handed out to teach responsibility; the idea is that getting a tardy slip and having to present it to the teacher is burdensome enough to change the behavior of the child. In reality, not every child starts the day with support from an adult at home. By handing out tardy slips, children who are late to school take the blame for not having the support systems other children rely on daily. This isn’t the lesson most schools set out to teach.

By contrast, transformative practice reflects a realization that, for the most part, arriving at school on time for elementary school children is the responsibility of parents or other adult caregivers. Some students get up, get dressed, fix breakfast, and get to school without the help of an adult. A positive, welcoming message from the school is more helpful and productive than a tardy slip, and allows students to get to class more quickly.

Key Research Findings

A growing body of research indicates that students' life experiences deeply impact their academic, cognitive, and social-emotional development.

An estimated two in three Alaskan children are exposed to traumatic experiences.¹ Significant emotional stress and trauma during childhood affects Alaskans across racial, social, economic, and geofigure lines. **Figure 1** shows the percentage of Alaskan adults who report experiencing adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).

Hundreds of studies have found that the more exposure a child has to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), the higher the child's risk for poor educational, social, health, and economic outcomes in childhood and adulthood. **Figure 2**, based on Alaska research, illustrates the link between increased exposure to childhood trauma and a variety of conditions that present challenges for both the learner and the school.

As **figure 2** shows, children with four or more ACEs – i.e., significant childhood trauma – have 3 to 6 times the rate of learning disabilities, repeating a grade, attention problems, and individual education plans than their peers with no ACEs.

These challenges lead to lower educational attainment: Alaskan adults with four or more ACEs are half as likely to graduate from college as those with no ACEs, and more than twice as likely not to complete high school. **Childhood trauma reaches into our classrooms and impacts every aspect of teaching and learning.**

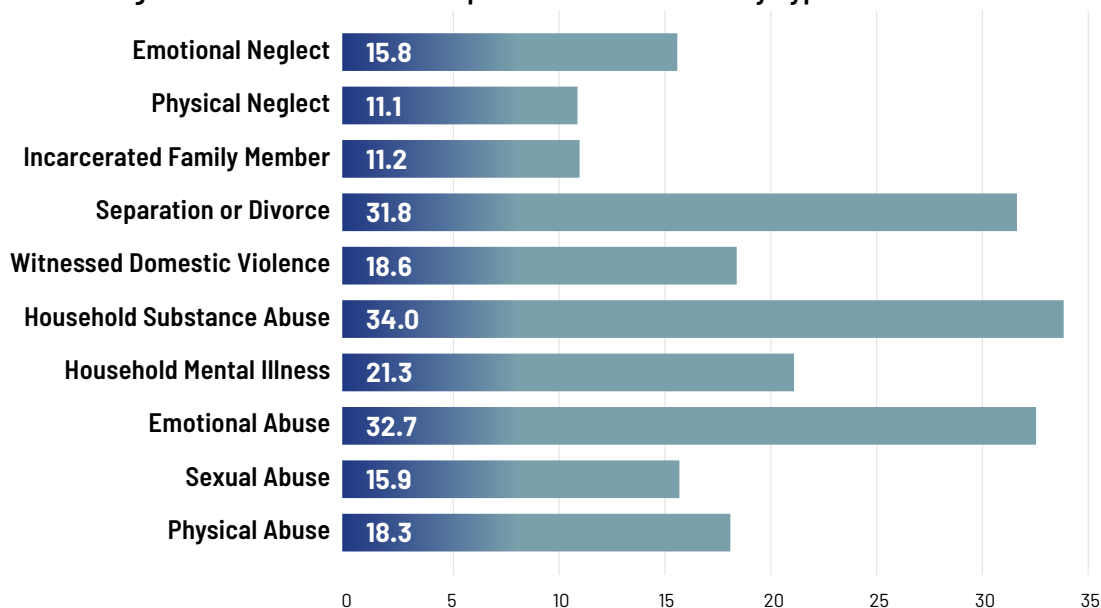
There is hope. Studies have found that the negative impacts of childhood trauma can be reduced through positive experiences and relationships. A 2017 study finds, "Positive experiences and supportive relationships provide the buffering that allows children to withstand, or recover, from adverse experiences."²

Schools have a unique role to play because schools are where families and students intersect with the broader community. This framework explores ways schools can work with students, families and communities to reduce the impact of trauma and help all students thrive.

What is Alaska's Transforming Schools Framework?

The vision of this tool is to help Alaska schools and communities integrate trauma-engaged policies and practices that improve academic outcomes and well-being for all students. Improving student outcomes requires us to support the whole child, and to understand how trauma impacts a child's ability to learn and thrive.

1. Percentage of Alaskan Adults who Reported Individual ACEs by Type



Source: 2014-2015 [Alaska Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System](#). Section of Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Alaska Division of Public Health, & Centers for Disease Control

2. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Incidences Among Alaskan Students and Select Outcomes

Outcomes	0 ACEs	4 or More ACEs	Increase from those with 0 to 4+ ACEs
Learning Disabilities	6.2%	23%	3.6 times greater
Attention Deficit Disorder	4.7%	21%	4.5 times greater
Individual Education Plan	7%	27%	3.8 times greater
Repeated a Grade	2.9%	16%	5.4 times greater

Source: Child and Adolescent Health Management Initiative (2012). 2011-2012 [National Survey of Children's Health](#), U.S. Department of Health and Social Services, Analysis by the Alaska Mental Health Board.

The tardy-slip scenario at the start of this chapter illustrates that when our schools are not trauma-engaged, we may adopt practices that compound the stresses on vulnerable children.³

Conversely, when we understand trauma and stress, we can act compassionately and take steps that support wellness and help students engage in learning. In the tardy-slip scenario, those steps were to make each child feel welcome, to ensure each child is fed, and to eliminate the potential negative peer attention or stigma of a tardy slip.

This framework is a resource for Alaskans – educators, parents, and community members – who want to help make their schools a place of positive transformation for all children.

Continuum of Change

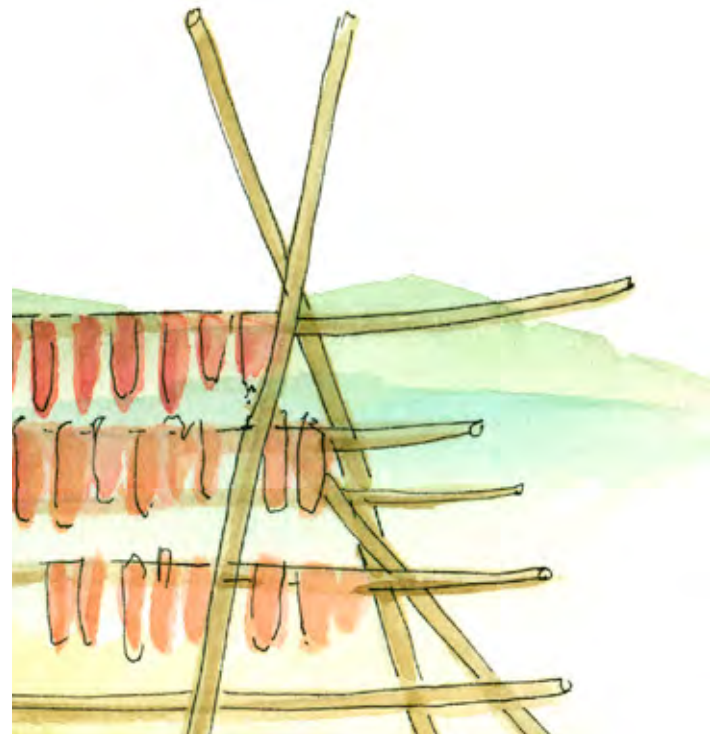
Most trauma-informed work moves along a continuum of change:

Trauma-Organized

Trauma-organized communities and schools are impacted by stress, avoidant of issues, and isolated in their practices, which can exacerbate the impacts of trauma for some students. When functioning in isolation, schools can be reactive rather than thoughtful, can magnify trauma rather than offering an alternative to traumatic experiences, can avoid or discount trauma rather than acknowledging its prevalence, and can be run in an authoritarian manner rather than an authoritative manner.

Trauma-Informed

Trauma-informed communities and schools develop a shared language to define, normalize, and address the impact of trauma on students and school staff. They operate from a foundational understanding of the nature and impact of trauma, coupled with the power of resiliency.



- 1 Alaska Department of Health and Social Services. (2015) [Adverse Childhood Experiences: Overcoming ACEs in Alaska](#).
- 2 Sege, R., et al. (2017) [Balancing Adverse Childhood Experiences with HOPE \(Health Outcomes of Positive Experience\): New Insights into the Role of Positive Experience on Child and Family Development](#), Casey Family Programs.
- 3 McInerney, M. & McKlinton, A. (undated) [Unlocking the Door to Learning: Trauma-Informed Classrooms & Transformational Schools](#). Education Law Center.

Trauma-Engaged

Trauma-engaged communities and schools go a step further. They have policies, procedures, and support services that embed an understanding of trauma. Their approaches to learning and discipline are trauma-shielding or trauma-reducing. They are reflective and collaborative, they promote a culture of learning, and they make meaning out of the past. They are also prevention-oriented and have relational leadership.

Transforming Schools: Creating trauma-engaged, safe, and supportive schools requires holistic change, and a mindset shift for students, administrators, school staff, and community members.

Relationships as the Foundation

Positive relationships are essential for all of us to thrive. These relationships are central to success in trauma-engaged schools. The organization Trauma Transformed explains:

Trauma is overwhelming and can leave us feeling isolated or betrayed, which may make it difficult to trust others and receive support. When we experience compassionate and dependable relationships, we re-establish trusting connections with others that foster mutual wellness.⁴

Developing a successful trauma-engaged system requires relationship-building every step of the way. Each key adult in a student's life has a role in modeling positive, healthy relationships to promote student healing and learning. Similarly, the relationships we build across schools, communities, and with families are critical for supporting the whole child.

Context for This Work

Elders often share that communities across Alaska have been healing, supporting and strengthening children, parents, and all community members for thousands of years. This tool builds on past and current work, integrating what we know about best practices with the unique strengths and circumstances of our communities, schools, and families in Alaska.

For nearly two decades, organizations and communities across the state including behavioral health, public health, youth-serving organizations, tribal organizations and non-profit organizations like the Association of Alaska School Boards have been promoting resilience through community-based efforts.

Alaska public health and behavioral health departments have been a leader in researching and sharing information about adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), and have made significant contributions to the understanding of ACEs, trauma, culturally responsive learning, and brain science.

This framework also builds on recent state-level efforts – the Alaska Safe Children's Act and Alaska's Education Challenge. Alaska's Education Challenge, introduced by Governor Bill Walker in January 2017, brought Alaskans together to think deeply about our education system and decide what an excellent education for every student every day looks like. Cultivating trauma-engaged schools emerged as one of the top three priorities for every state school board member.

Historic and Systemic Trauma

There are special considerations for trauma and resilience in Alaska. Alaska's history is key to understanding the disproportionality of Alaska Native children with high ACEs scores and high dropout rates, and the need for culturally specific trauma-engaged schools. As part of the colonial effort to gain control of lands, resources, and souls, many Alaska Native children were forcibly removed from their homes and communities and sent hundreds or thousands of miles away to boarding schools established and run by the state, church and businesses. Many Alaska Native children were physically, spiritually, emotionally, and sexually abused by those who had taken control of their lives. Many were punished for speaking their languages. Our current systems often perpetuate policies that do not recognize Alaska Native peoples' culture, languages, and ways of life or accommodate for the ongoing impact this historical trauma has created.

Trauma also plays a major role in at-risk and special populations, including children in foster care and the juvenile justice system, LGBTQ children,⁵ children whose families have recently immigrated from war-torn regions, and children living in areas of high poverty or crime.

Suggested Steps

Schools and districts looking to become more trauma-engaged are most likely to succeed with thoughtful preparation. Tips for getting started:

- 1. Develop a clear rationale and vision.** Consider why this work matters, what your school and community stand to gain through more thoughtful, trauma-engaged practice, and develop a vision for transforming your school, district, and community.
- 2. Assess your community's readiness.** Districts need to assess their capacity to move toward more trauma-engaged practices. Identify or develop the necessary infrastructure and supports at the administrative level. Districts also need to determine where they want to start – district, school, classroom, community.
- 3. Gain buy-in and trust through communication, collaboration, and commitment to success.** This work will not succeed and endure without broad participation and support from teachers, administrators, families and community members.
- 4. Promote a culture of safety and respect for this work.** Childhood trauma, intergenerational trauma, and implicit bias can be difficult to approach. Establish and maintain clear standards for respectful listening and dialog.
- 5. Develop a common understanding of terms** to establish and maintain respectful, constructive and open dialog while using this tool. For example, the term “historic trauma,” used in this document, may be called “untold histories” elsewhere.
- 6. Expect setbacks.** There will be mistakes and challenges in this work. View them as opportunities to learn. This work requires ongoing commitment and perseverance, resilience and reflection – the same skills children need to grow and change.
- 7. Use this framework as a resource.** You do not need to work through the chapters sequentially; feel free to pick and choose. Likewise, not every suggested step or reflection question will apply to all users. Take what works, and adapt it as needed.

Reflections

- ▶ What does childhood trauma look like in your community? How does it impact your schools?
- ▶ Why is this work needed in your community?
- ▶ What is your community's vision for transforming schools? What will success look like?
- ▶ Who can your schools partner with to help reach the broader community?
- ▶ Who needs to be on board for this to work?
- ▶ What is needed to be ready to successfully undertake this work?

Key Terms

Childhood trauma: A negative event or series of events that surpasses the child's ordinary coping skills. It comes in many forms and includes experiences such as maltreatment, witnessing violence, or the loss of a loved one. Traumatic experiences can impact brain development and behavior inside and outside the classroom.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs): ACEs refer to various negative experiences in childhood including medical and natural disasters experienced by children and youth. The original ACE list includes 10 categories of childhood stressors:

- ▶ **Abuse:** emotional, physical, sexual abuse
- ▶ **Trauma in household environment:** substance abuse, parental separation and/or divorce, mentally ill or suicidal household member, witnessing violence, imprisoned household member
- ▶ **Neglect:** abandonment, child's basic physical and/or emotional needs unmet

4 Cordero, S. (2018) [March Principle of the Month: Compassion and Dependability](#). *Trauma Transformed: A Program of East Bay Agency for Children* (blogpost).

5 Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (or queer)

Social-emotional learning (SEL): The process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

Self-regulation: The ability to manage one's emotions and behavior in accordance with the demands of the situation. It includes being able to resist highly emotional reactions to upsetting stimuli, to calm yourself down when you get upset, to adjust to a change in expectations, and

to handle frustration without an outburst. It is a set of skills that enables children to direct their own behavior towards a goal despite the unpredictability of the world and our own feelings.

Child well-being: A state of being that arises when a child's needs are met, and the child has the freedom and ability to meaningfully pursue their goals and ways of life in a supportive, equitable setting now and into the future.



1 DECONSTRUCTING TRAUMA



“Childhood trauma turns a learning brain into a surviving brain.”

—Josh Arvidson, Director, Alaska Child Trauma Center

SUMMARY

High levels of toxic stress impact the development of children’s brain wiring, impairing their ability to regulate, or control, their emotions, thoughts and behaviors. Schools can help students learn self-regulation and can support positive brain development through a whole-school, whole-community approach.

In Our Schools: Sarah’s Story

Sarah is a 13-year-old middle school student with average grades. One day Sarah starts a food fight in her school cafeteria. The mess leads to a negative interaction with a lunchroom monitor, and Sarah is unable to calm down and control her frustrations.

COMMON PRACTICE

Sarah is suspended from school for three days. She falls behind in her work and feels angry and alienated from school.

TRANSFORMATIVE PRACTICE

An adult at the school who fostered a relationship with Sarah learned that Sarah recently found out her mother was going to jail. Sarah’s school has been incorporating knowledge of trauma’s impact on students and staff into their culture and practices. The adult reports the situation to school administrators, and the school develops a plan to promote accountability and help Sarah develop the skills she is missing. These steps include in-school suspension, support from a school counselor, outreach to Sarah’s family, and an opportunity for Sarah to repair relationships disrupted by her behavior in the cafeteria.

Key Research Findings

The brain goes through enormous development during childhood and adolescence in response to a person’s environment and experiences.

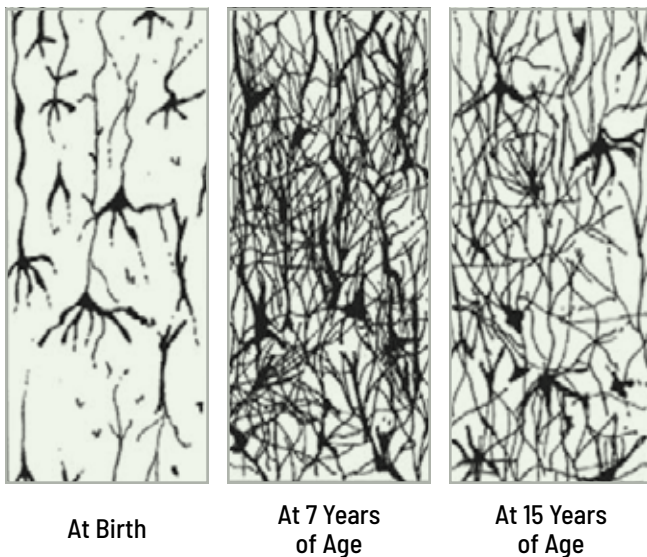
Understanding the biology of stress helps track the pathways from childhood stress to undesirable behaviors and outcomes, and gives us insight into how we might interrupt those pathways and reduce harmful impacts.

Childhood is a Key Time for Brain Development

Figure 3 represents the complexity of the brain's pathways at three stages of development. The early years generate immensely complex wiring in response to experiences. Around puberty a pruning occurs where the most frequently used pathways are hardened and those least used are discarded. Schools are in a position to reinforce positive brain development and significantly mitigate problematic pathways developed from early traumatic experiences.

It is possible to "rewire" the brain at any age, but it is easiest in childhood.

3. Brain Wiring Through Childhood

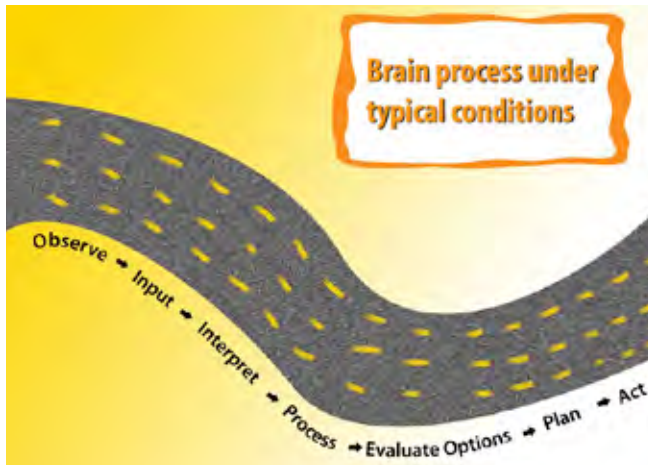


Source: Adapted from Corel, J.L. *The postnatal development of the human cerebral cortex*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; 1975.

The Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University describes three types of stress:

- ▶ **Positive stress response** is a normal and essential part of healthy development, characterized by brief increases in heart rate and mild elevations in hormone levels. For example, the first day at a new school might trigger this type of stress response.
- ▶ **Tolerable stress response** activates the body's alert systems to a greater degree as a result of more severe, longer-lasting stressors, such as the loss of a loved one, a natural disaster, or a frightening injury. If the activation is time-limited and buffered by relationships with adults who help the child adapt, the brain and other organs recover without lasting damage.
- ▶ **Toxic stress response** can occur when a child experiences strong, frequent or prolonged perceived threats or danger – such as physical or emotional abuse, chronic neglect, caregiver substance abuse or mental illness, exposure to violence, or the accumulated burdens of family economic hardship – without adequate adult support. Prolonged activation of the stress response systems can disrupt the development of brain architecture and other organs, and increase the risk for stress-related disease and cognitive impairment.

4. Typical conditions



Graphics 4-6: Source: Arvidson, J, et al. 2011, *Trauma 101: Understanding Trauma in the Lives of Children and Adults*.

5. Alarm System



6. Express Route



Graphics 4-6 illustrate how repeated stress can lead to troublesome cognitive habits.

Under typical conditions, we move through our lives taking in the world, interpreting what we experience through our senses, processing and evaluating what we want to do, and finally planning and acting on all those inputs.

When we run into a stressor or potentially dangerous situation, our brain, which is constantly scanning for "trouble," switches to a stress response system. The more contemplative aspects of our usual response are cut out – and instead flight, fight or freeze responses are activated. These responses get us out of trouble fast, and are very effective for situations requiring immediate action.

When we are exposed to repeated or toxic levels of stress, the "express route" becomes the default response for most events. Being on this kind of alert in all settings inhibits thoughtful decision-making and hurts performance in school and in life.

When the developing brain is chronically stressed, it releases hormones that shrink the hippocampus, an area of the brain responsible for processing emotion and memory and managing stress. Recent studies suggest that increased exposure to adverse childhood experiences results in less gray matter in the brain, including the prefrontal cortex, an area related to decision-making and self-regulatory skills, and the amygdala, or fear-processing center.¹ In other words, childhood trauma may damage the developing brain, causing problems with learning, decision-making, and managing emotions

¹ Nakazawa, D.J. (2016) [7 Ways Childhood Adversity Changes a Child's Brain](#). ACEs Too High News.

There is hope. Just as negative experiences can harm the brain, positive interventions can help repair damaged neural pathways.² Active interventions can and do change the life course for individuals exposed to high childhood stress levels. A review of research literature points to **self-regulation**³ – or learning to control and regulate one’s emotions – as the key to mitigating the impacts of stress and trauma.

Schools Have a Key Role

Schools have a critical role in helping build and reinforce neural pathways that support resilience, good decision-making, positive relationships, and lifelong learning. Schools connect children to concepts about numbers, sorting and words, and help children understand how to interact with others and manage their own thoughts and feelings. The impacts of this foundational work stretch across a child’s lifetime.

How should schools approach this task? Surveys of Alaska secondary school students suggest some starting points. Alaska high school students who believe teachers care about them and that their schools have clear rules have better grades and participate less often in a host of dangerous activities. These findings support research on the importance of relationships and structure – in the form of clear, fair, and consistent rules – to help children manage and overcome the impacts of trauma and difficult experiences.⁴

Classroom Connection

Provide warm and responsive relationships in school to all students. This includes linking words and actions to unconditional positive regard for students.

The physical environment should be safe both physically and emotionally for students. Consistent, predictable routines as well as clear goals for behavior with well-defined logical consequences for negative behavior are essential.

Self-regulation skills should be a part of the school experience through modeling, instruction and opportunities to practice. Just like math skills, self-regulation skills take time to develop and strengthen.

To help children and youth develop and sustain self-regulation skills, adults need to understand trauma and model specific skills and interventions. Key skills for students and adults are self-awareness, accessing supportive relationships, and self-regulation amidst what can be a very demanding school day. Self-care, addressed in another chapter, is also critical.

This work is not easy given the many demands on teachers and school staff. There needs to be a structure of support and understanding within the broader school and community.

Trauma-Engaged Practice in Action: Sarah’s Story

The story at the start of this chapter illustrates that troubling in-school behaviors may have their origin in family stress. Sarah faces an overwhelming change to her family structure. Her mother’s impending incarceration is likely not the only difficulty Sarah has faced.

In an ideal world, Sarah would tell an adult, “I am very stressed and need help,” and adults in school would have the skills and time to help her. But Sarah doesn’t have the skill to take that step, and instead communicates through an outburst of inappropriate behavior.

As Sarah’s story shows, stress and trauma impact children’s ability to regulate their emotions and thoughts. This is true for adults too. Behavior is a form of communication and high levels of stress can overwhelm us. A trauma-engaged approach focuses on accountability and skill-building so Sarah can learn to manage her stress in a healthier way. Steps might include:

- ▶ **Let Sarah finish her school day in an alternative setting.** Rather than send Sarah out of school, provide a safe place for her to gain control of her emotions and assess what happened with a supportive adult. Use in-school suspension if suspension is warranted.
- ▶ **Offer a restorative approach for Sarah to make amends.** People whose behavior hurts others need an opportunity to repair broken or strained relationships. This provides accountability and prevents negative relationships from festering. In Sarah’s case, apologizing to cafeteria staff might be a starting point.

2 Hosier, D. (2013) *Recovery: How the Brain Can “Re-wire” Itself*. Childhood Trauma Recovery.

3 Murray, D.W., et al. (2016) *Self-Regulation and Toxic Stress Report 4: Implications for Programs and Practice*. OPRE Report # 2016-97, Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

4 Rosanbalm, K.D., & Murray, D.W. (2017) *Caregiver Co-regulation Across Development: A Practice Brief*. OPRE Brief #2017-80. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.



- ▶ **Contact a family member or supportive adult** to get information on Sarah's mother's sentencing. Working with Sarah's family will help the school support and augment what the family is doing.
- ▶ **Create a plan of support.** Make a plan Sarah can rely on to help her when feelings get overwhelming.
- ▶ **Model and teach self-regulation skills in the classroom and school.** Whole-classroom and whole-school approaches will support all students and adults, and build a more supportive and healthy community.

IDEAL OUTCOMES

Sarah gets the support she needs. While she still struggles she begins to learn to regulate her emotions and has a plan she can name to deal with strong emotions. Sarah spends more time learning because school feels like a safer environment and she is better able to control her response to stressors.

Suggested Steps

- 1. Assess your classroom or school's current discipline policies and practices.** Consider whether these practices promote accountability and help students repair relationships and improve self-regulation. [See chapters on Policy, Skill Building, and Professional Learning for more.]
- 2. Identify the supports and resources available to students in school.** If these resources are inadequate or underdeveloped, consider how they might be augmented. [See chapter on Support Services.]
- 3. Identify the supports and resources available within the community at large.** Consider engaging those that may not already be involved with the schools, or strengthening communication and collaboration with those that are already engaged. [See chapter on Cultural Integration and Community Co-creation.]
- 4. Share this information.** Change often begins with understanding. The more people understand that stress has real impacts on the brain, the more we can act with compassion and caring toward our students and each other. [See chapter on Professional Learning.]

Reflections

- ▶ How does the science of stress and brain development described in this chapter shed light on what you see in your schools?
- ▶ How do these policies and practices promote accountability and help students repair relationships and improve self-regulation? Could they be improved?
- ▶ What is the current level of understanding of trauma among families, school staff, and administrators in your school or community?
- ▶ What strengths in your community could be tapped to support students and staff with high levels of trauma?
- ▶ What additional information about trauma and its impact on the brain would be helpful?
- ▶ In the scenario described in this chapter, what more could be done for Sarah?

Key Terms

Self-regulation: The ability to manage one's emotions and behavior in accordance with the demands of the situation. It includes being able to resist highly emotional reactions to upsetting stimuli, to calm yourself down when you get upset, to adjust to a change in expectations, and to handle frustration without an outburst. It is a set of skills that enables children to direct their own behavior towards a goal despite the unpredictability of the world and our own feelings.



2 RELATIONSHIP BUILDING



There's always a story behind a student's behavior and I do my best to tune in carefully to what the student says or doesn't say.

—20-year Alaska educator

SUMMARY

Relationships are at the heart of any trauma-engaged approach. Interventions that foster supportive relationships help students make more positive connections with peers, feel more safe and secure in school, and achieve greater academic success. Transformative schools work to value and foster relationships at all levels — between adults and students, among students, among adults in schools, with families and in the community.

In Our Schools: Christopher's Story

Christopher is in 9th grade. He comes to school every day but seems uninterested in classes. He does not turn in his homework and rarely speaks in class. He becomes most animated when another student is disruptive—especially in a loud, violent or profane way. Although he is academically capable, he is not doing well in school.

COMMON PRACTICE

The math teacher asks, "What's wrong with you? Why are you failing this class?" Christopher shows little apparent concern. His other teachers are equally frustrated with him. Since he is not causing any real trouble in class, Christopher tends to

slide by. Over time, Christopher becomes more distant and fails most of his classes.

TRANSFORMATIVE PRACTICE

The math teacher, Mr. Smith, notices Christopher sometimes doodles in class, and takes time one day to admire Christopher's drawings. Christopher shares more of his drawings, and Mr. Smith and Christopher begin to develop a relationship. Mr. Smith asks about life outside of school and learns that Christopher is facing major challenges at home. Having learned about trauma, Mr. Smith understands that students who experience trauma may have more difficulty trusting and connecting with adults. He finds this true with Christopher, who tends to give up and get angry with his teachers. Mr. Smith reaches out to other school staff to help support Christopher. Together with Christopher and his family they develop a support plan. Mr. Smith and other school staff show Christopher they care while continuing to set high expectations. With school staff working together with Christopher, they see improvements in attention and perseverance not only in math class, but in all of his classes. They work together to access the best support within and outside of the school.

“Although teachers are not therapists or clinicians, and are neither trained nor prepared to delve into personal trauma histories with their students, there are techniques they can use that can have a healing effect. Indeed, the very relationship they form with students can be a key element of healing in and of itself.”

-University of Melbourne researchers

Key Research Findings

Research consistently shows that positive and authentic relationships can counter negative impacts of childhood trauma. One researcher describes safe, stable, nurturing adult relationships as “poison control” for children who experience toxic levels of stress or trauma.¹ A 2008 longitudinal study found that key roles for adults include listening, being available, being positive, and intervening.²

Another childhood trauma expert cites a 2015 study of the brain structure of children who had been removed from traumatic homes; several years later, those placed in high-quality nurturing environments showed significantly different brain activity than children in institutionalized care. ***“High-quality nurturing caregiving—safe, stable, nurturing relationships—can actually change the structure of children’s brains,”*** explains Dr. Nadine Burke Harris.³

A note on implicit bias: In *Culturally Responsive Learning and the Brain*, author Zaretta Hammond explains that many teachers may not be fully aware of their interactions with students. In one study, teachers reported positively interacting with all of their students equally regardless of race, economics, trauma experience, etc. Teachers were then asked to record their positive interactions with students over an extended period. These interactions could not include corrective or instructional interactions. Reflecting on their records, teachers realized they were having many interactions with all students, but there were students that only had corrective interactions, not positive relationship-building interactions.

Guiding Principles for Building Meaningful Relationships with Students.⁴

Following are some examples of principles and practices of trauma-engaged school staff.

- ▶ **Always empower, never disempower:** Students who have experienced trauma often seek to control their environment to protect themselves, and their behavior generally deteriorates the more helpless they feel. Classroom discipline can be done in a way that is respectful, consistent, and nonviolent.
- ▶ **Express unconditional positive regard:** Consistent and caring adults can help students build trust and form relationships. Even if a student acts out and expresses hatred for or cruel judgments of the teacher, the response must be unconditional positive regard: *“I care about you and will support you in getting your work done.”*
- ▶ **Maintain high expectations:** Consistency in the classroom helps students differentiate between unsafe rules that led to them experiencing trauma and rules that ensure their safety and well-being. By consistently providing high expectations, limits, and routines, adults send the message that the student is worthy of continued unconditional positive regard and attention.
- ▶ **Check assumptions, observe, and question:** Deep listening is more important than your response. Ask questions and confirm your understanding instead of making assumptions. Trauma and toxic stress can affect any student and manifest in many ways.
- ▶ **Be a relationship coach:** Help students from preschool through high school to develop relationship skills through modeling and coaching. This will help students learn to regulate emotions and connect with their classmates, family members, and others.
- ▶ **Provide opportunities for students to help:** Support student relationships through peer tutoring, role playing, support groups and other guided opportunities to practice and learn social-emotional skills.

All Relationships Matter

There are many relationships that play a role in transforming schools.

Adult-to-Student Relationships. There is a direct relationship between the number of caring adults in a student's life and student outcomes. Adults can begin deepening a relationship through "the little things" – such as welcoming them to school or the classroom, talking about common interests, highlighting students' strengths, or mentioning something a student did outside class.

Student-to-Student Relationships. Fostering positive peer relationships begins with establishing norms and a supportive environment for the school and classroom. Through role playing, healthy relationships programs, and peer mentoring programs, schools can create the right space for students to create their own positive peer climates.

Some examples of peer-led approaches are Natural Helpers, Youth Leaders, You Are Not Alone (YANA), Sources of Strength, and Teens Acting Against Violence.

Adult-to-Adult Relationships. Students see adults model behavior throughout the school day. They look to school staff to see the norms and how staff relate to each other. Adults have a critical role in modeling appropriate and supportive practices and language, especially in high-stress or controversial situations. Healthy conflict resolution practices create productive and supportive school climates.

Family-School Partnerships. Respect and authentic interest in families and community goes a long way toward fostering trusting, collaborative relationships. Create opportunities to build relationships that are equal in power and accessible and welcoming to families from all socioeconomic backgrounds. Some families may have negative experiences with the education system going back one or more generations. Relationships with these families may take extra care to build. (See Family Partnerships section for more information.)

Schools that recognize the central role of relationships often place a strong value on staff retention and continuity. Schools can build learning communities for site administrators and teachers; create meaningful opportunities for community participation in the schools; and support training and self-care among school staff.

"I always talk to students outside class time. If they are hanging out in my classroom during lunch, I have lots of casual conversation."

-Alaska educator



- 1 Bright, M. (2017) *Why stable relationships are 'poison control' in fighting trauma and stress in kids*, The Conversation.
- 2 Johnson, B. (2008) *Teacher student relationships which promote resilience at school: a micro-level analysis of students' views*, British Journal of Guidance & Counseling, 36(4): 385-398.
- 3 Smith, J.A. (2018) *How to Reduce the Impact of Childhood Trauma*, Greater Good Magazine.
- 4 52 Wolpaw, R., Johnson, M.M., Hertel, R., & Kincaid, S.O. (2011). *The Heart of Learning and Teaching: Compassion, Resiliency, and Academic Success*. Olympia, WA: Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. Retrieved from <http://www.k12.wa.us/CompassionateSchools/Resources.aspx>.



“I never push for an answer. Angry or defiant kids often can’t answer, Why are you so angry? I like to leave the conversation door open. ‘Come by and talk to me when you have the time. In the meantime, read this...’ They usually come back to chat when they’ve calmed down.”

-Alaska educator

Peer relationships in action: Sources Of Strength

is a national best-practices youth suicide prevention program. Adapted and adopted by communities across Alaska, Sources of Strength harnesses the power of peer social networks to change unhealthy norms and cultures.

Relationship-Building in Action: Christopher’s Story

In the story at the beginning of this chapter, Christopher was disengaged and at risk of failing out of high school. A teacher made some effort to reach Christopher, but did not take the time to build trust and understand what may have led to his lack of engagement in school.

When school staff took time to build trust with Christopher, things began to turn around. This was supported by a team approach with the following key components:

- ▶ The teacher reaches out and builds rapport with Christopher. As trust is established, Christopher shares important insights into his life.
- ▶ The teacher finds opportunities to recognize Christopher in work he does well.
- ▶ The teacher provides a safe place, or alternative learning space, for Christopher in the room when he shows signs of being agitated by loud, disruptive noises.
- ▶ The teacher collaborates with other school staff. As a result
 - Christopher’s teachers better understand what works for Christopher academically;
 - A school counselor reaches out to Christopher;
 - Ultimately, the school helps the family access outside services and support.

IDEAL OUTCOMES

Christopher now feels connected to adults around him. He still struggles with the situation at home, but becomes more engaged in the classroom and earns passing grades. He also gains access to services he needs, and the school establishes a supportive relationship with Christopher’s mother.

Suggested Steps

1. **Walk the talk** about building relationships. Model caring and respectful relationships from the top down – among school staff, between staff and families, and between staff and students.
2. **Post cultural or school values about relationships.** These values should be clear, concise, and easy to understand.
3. **Treat each student uniquely.** There is no formula for relationship-building. Authentic listening and treating each person as a unique and valued human is what matters.
4. **Provide professional learning opportunities** about relationship building for staff and families.
5. **Create a positive professional climate** that includes working agreements about staff values, interactions, and collaboration.
6. **Ensure every voice is heard.** Sometimes listening is more important than speaking. Create opportunities to check in with students individually.
7. **Take inventory.** Use the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, School Climate & Connectedness Survey and other data to evaluate your progress.
8. Remember that **relationships are at the heart of any community.** The organization Trauma Transformed offers three points of reflection:
 - **Compassion:** We strive to act compassionately during our interactions with others through the genuine expression of concern and support.
 - **Relationships:** We value and work towards secure and dependable relationships characterized by mutual respect and attunement.
 - **Communication:** We promote dependability and create trust by communicating in ways that are clear, inclusive, and useful to others.

Reflections

- ▶ How do you build relationships with students who may be experiencing trauma? What results have you seen?
- ▶ What strategies have you tried that have not worked?
- ▶ How can you make time for relationship-building without exhausting yourself? Are there ways to build in time to check in with vulnerable students?
- ▶ How do you decide when to ask a personal question and when to give a student space?
- ▶ What do relationships between staff look like in your school?
- ▶ What do student relationships look like in your school?
- ▶ What are discipline norms in your school and how do they impact relationship building?
- ▶ What does the School Climate and Connectedness Survey or the Youth Risk Behavior Survey tell you about relationships within your school?
- ▶ How would students and families describe their experience with staff in your school?
- ▶ What does the community value in a relationship?
- ▶ What does staff do to repair relationships that have been harmed?
- ▶ What could your staff do to infuse restorative practices in your school?



3 POLICY CONSIDERATIONS



“There is nothing inevitable about student outcomes. It is a result of the policies and practices we put into place. We hold a great responsibility.”

–Alaska School Board Member

SUMMARY

Policy helps set the tone and tenor of our schools, and ensures consistency of approach and understanding. Policies support the overall goals of education, student safety and well-being. Intentional policies and trauma-engaged policies can help a school system and community integrate trauma-engaged practices and build social and emotional supports.

In Our Schools: Maria's Story

Maria, a high school junior, comes to school wearing a T-shirt that has a beer logo on it, in violation of the school's dress code.

COMMON PRACTICE

Maria is sent home due to her dress code infraction. She misses a day of school and, already struggling, falls further behind.

TRANSFORMATIVE PRACTICE

The school's goal is to enforce the dress code without removing students from school. The school has a closet of donated clothes for students who don't meet the dress code. Maria is sent to the principal's office, and a female staff member helps

her find something suitable. While they are looking, Maria shares that due to problems at home, she has been staying with friends and does not have access to most of her clothing and belongings. Maria finds a plain shirt, changes in the bathroom, and returns to class. School staff follow up with Maria to make a plan of support.

Key Research Findings

Policy choices impact student outcomes. In some schools, restorative discipline policies – policies that emphasize accountability and repairing relationships – have led to reductions in out-of-school suspensions and increases in student achievement. In one middle school, a pilot site for restorative justice, suspension rates fell from 30 percent to 10 percent within two years, and within four years the school's standardized test scores went up by 74 points.¹

¹ Alameda County School Health Services Coalition. (2011) [Restorative Justice: A Working Guide for Our Schools](#).

Policies can be developed in ways that are reactive or proactive: Reactive policy emerges in response to a concern or crisis that must be addressed – health emergencies and environmental disasters are two examples. Proactive policies, by contrast, are introduced and pursued through deliberate choice.²

Often, schools and school boards do not make policy changes until an incident – hurtful graffiti, for example – occurs. By working proactively, not reactively, districts can develop policies and practices that create a supportive and sensitive environment for all learners.

Re-examining Policy

Policy exists at different levels and in different forms

- ▶ *State-level policy* can take the form of laws or resolutions. Such policies set a tone or expectation from the top-down. These are our state-level statutes that guide or mandate district regulations.
- ▶ *School board policy* is an essential governance and management tool to operate districts in a legal, fair, and consistent manner that is focused on student success. Establishing and maintaining thoughtful, clearly written policy helps guide board members and superintendents in decision-making.
- ▶ *School regulations* serve as a guide to staff, students, parents, and the local community concerning a school's and district's philosophy, goals, and expectations. These are often published in handbooks.
- ▶ *Classroom guidelines* – sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit – help establish and reinforce the classroom culture and expectations for students and parents.

Many policies have administrative regulations or guidance outlining specific ways to uphold each policy.

There are many transformative policies that can be adopted. Some key areas to consider include:

- ▶ Attendance
- ▶ Discipline
- ▶ School climate
- ▶ Social and emotional learning
- ▶ Philosophies including awareness of Adverse Childhood Experiences and trauma
- ▶ Multicultural education
- ▶ Partnerships with tribes
- ▶ Instruction and curriculum
- ▶ Community relationships

- ▶ Professional development
- ▶ Crisis response
- ▶ Multiple measures of student learning

State Policy

Alaska's guiding education policy, set in state law, states:

It is the policy of this state that the purpose of education is to:

- ▶ help ensure that all students will succeed in their education and work,
- ▶ shape worthwhile and satisfying lives for themselves,
- ▶ exemplify the best values of society, and
- ▶ be effective in improving the character and quality of the world about them.³

State policy compels us to reach all students; to do so requires us to use a trauma-engaged lens and supportive practices throughout our education system.

Alaska lawmakers adopted a health bill in 2018 that adds trauma-engaged language to the Office of Children's Services statutes: "It is the policy of the state to acknowledge and take into account the principles of early childhood and youth brain development and, whenever possible, consider the concepts of early adversity, toxic stress, childhood trauma, and the promotion of resilience through protective relationships, supports, self-regulation, and services."⁴ This language can serve as a model for education-related legislation in Alaska.

Some states have adopted education policies specific to addressing trauma, including Wisconsin and California:

Wisconsin: A resolution adopted in 2013 states that policy decisions "will acknowledge and take into account the principles of early childhood brain development and will, whenever possible, consider the concepts of toxic stress, early adversity, and buffering relationships, and note the role of early intervention and investment in early childhood years as important strategies to achieve a lasting foundation for a more prosperous and sustainable state through investing in human capital."⁵



California: A resolution adopted in 2014 urges the Governor to reduce children's exposure to adverse childhood experiences, address the impacts of those experiences, and invest in preventive health care and mental health and wellness interventions; and to consider the principles of brain development, the intimate connection between mental and physical health, the concepts of toxic stress, adverse childhood experiences, buffering relationships, and the roles of early intervention and investment in children as important strategies.⁶

School Board Policy

Most school district policies are designed to address state or federal statutes or to support core philosophies for each district. Fifty-two of 54 Alaska school districts use recommended policies of the Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB). In recent years, 53 districts supported a resolution on trauma-engaged schools.⁷ Many Alaska school districts have begun reviewing their policies through the lens of cultural safety and trauma engagement. Some districts have been working on policy changes that address trauma, social and emotional learning, disciplinary approaches, and cultural safety. Specific recommendations are available from the Association of Alaska School Boards.

The Oakland Unified School District's discipline policy⁸ is an example of a policy developed through a trauma-engaged lens. In the excerpts below, note the emphasis on positive discipline, equity, staff training, and avoiding missed school.

- ▶ The Board desires the use of a positive approach to student behavior and the use of preventative and restorative practices to minimize the need for discipline and maximize instructional time for every student.
- ▶ The Board desires to identify and address the causes of disproportionate treatment in discipline to reduce and eliminate the racial disparities in the use of punitive school discipline, and any other disparities that may exist for other under-served populations.
- ▶ The Board recognizes the importance of using school and classroom management strategies that keep students in school and in the classroom.
- ▶ [With limited exceptions] an administrator or administrator's designee may only impose in-school and out-of-school suspension when other means of correction fail to bring about proper conduct or the student's presence causes a danger to persons.

- ▶ Other means of correction include, but are not limited to, conferences with students and their parents/guardians; use of student study teams or other intervention-related teams; enrollment in a program teaching social/emotional behavior or anger management; participation in a restorative justice program or restorative circles; and positive behavior support approaches.
- ▶ The Superintendent or designee shall provide professional development as necessary to assist staff in developing consistent classroom management skills, implementing effective disciplinary techniques, eliminating unconscious bias, and establishing cooperative relationships with parents/guardians.
- ▶ To ensure that discipline is appropriate and equitable, schools and the District shall collect and review discipline data that is disaggregated by school, race, gender, status as an English Language Learner, status as a student with a disability, and type of infraction on a monthly basis.

The basic process for policy change in Alaska: Each school board reviews a recommended policy change or new policy, takes public input and comment, adapts it if desired, and then votes on whether to adopt the new or amended policy. Policies can likewise be removed. Best practice is for school boards to update district policies annually to stay current with new statutes or to consider new policies that align with the needs of students in the district.

Significant policy changes require legal consultation to ensure compliance with state and federal law. It is also important to consider whether a new policy is consistent with the district's existing policy and guidelines, and school handbooks; if not, consider how the district will align other protocols and documents to ensure a new or amended policy is meaningful.

2 Torjman, S. (2005) *What is Policy?* Caledon Institute of Social Justice (now Maytree)(p.3).

3 [Alaska Statute 14.03.015](#), State Education Policy.

4 [Alaska Senate Bill 105, 2018](#), *Marital/Family Therapy; Health Care Prices*.

5 [Wisconsin Senate Joint Resolution 59, 2013](#), Relating to: Early Childhood Brain Development.

6 [California Assembly Concurrent Resolution 155, Chapter 144, 2014](#), Relative to Childhood Brain Development.

7 [Where We Stand AASB resolutions](#)

8 [Oakland Unified School District Board Policy 5144](#): Students, Discipline.

Policy Consideration: Tribal Governments and Education

Another policy area relevant to some Alaska communities is the relationship between tribes and schools. Tribal involvement has the potential to strengthen school-community bonds and ensure culturally sensitive, trauma-reducing practices. Several school districts are working with tribes to outline specific roles and relationships between the schools and tribes. Outside the policy framework, many districts or schools already work with tribal entities to provide guidance, resources, and cultural enrichment through programs such as visiting Elders.

There is also discussion of compacting with tribes to provide education. Compacts are agreements that enable tribes to take primary responsibility for providing services to tribal members. One of the recommendations that emerged from Alaska's Education Challenge in 2017 is to create an option for education compacting between the state and tribal government or similarly empowered Alaska Native organizations to realize better education outcomes for students.⁸

Washington state has worked closely with tribes on education, and has established several tribal compacts. One of the ideas behind these agreements is that tribes can do the best job providing culturally competent education to tribal members.

Policy in Action: Maria's Story

In the story at the beginning of this chapter, Maria wears a t-shirt that violates her school's dress code. Instead of sending her home, a trauma-engaged school helps Maria meet the dress code so she can stay in school. This relatively simple change prioritizes Maria's learning. In the process, school staff come to understand more about what is going on in Maria's life, and are better able to support her.

IDEAL OUTCOMES

Maria feels supported by school staff and feels that they are there to help rather than punish her. School staff reach out to Maria's family and begin to work on a plan to help Maria get the supports she needs.

Suggested Steps: Policy Considerations

1. **Review key policies that shape the district and schools.** School boards and district leadership can begin reviewing key school board policies or consider AASB's trauma-engaged policy recommendations package.
2. **Reach out to staff, board members, and community members during policy development.** The more people involved in policymaking, the more likely it is that new policies will be understood and successfully integrated.
3. **When drafting or amending policies, use language that is clear and easy to understand.** Be concise and use words that reflect local usage.
4. **Post policies broadly to ensure broad understanding and acceptance.** Post in schools and public buildings such as post offices and libraries, and online.
5. **Develop a short version of key policies** and post throughout schools and classrooms.
6. **Have a plan to ensure success.** This should include educating staff and the public on the rationale for new and amended policies, and providing the necessary staff training. Update other documents, administrative guidance, and school handbooks to ensure consistency.



⁸ Alaska Department of Education & Early Development (2018) [Alaska's Education Challenge Final Report](#); see Self-Governance Compacting, p. 17.



Reflections

- ▶ How do policies shape school climate and disciplinary approaches?
 - ▶ How do community members help shape and learn about policies and administrative regulations in your district?
 - ▶ What policy or regulation changes could improve trauma-engaged practices at the state, district, or school level?
 - ▶ How does your school district review and make changes to policies?
 - ▶ How informed is your school board about trauma and trauma-engaged policies?
- ▶ What policies exist to support whole-school social and emotional learning, restorative discipline practices, and students experiencing trauma?
 - ▶ In what ways do your district's policies support community partnerships?
 - ▶ What measures are in place to break down silos and strengthen partnerships?
 - ▶ How do schools, tribes, students, and families work together for the best outcomes for students?

Key Terms

Policy: a set of rules or principles that guide a government, business or organization.



4 PLANNING AND COORDINATION OF SCHOOLWIDE EFFORTS



“Too many initiatives die after a year or so. Trauma-informed work needs to be connected to a shared long-term vision and goals.”

—Alaska educator

SUMMARY

Trauma-engaged practice is most effective with the steady support of the entire school community. Crafting a plan that allows school staff, families and key partners to be part of the transformation process can help generate buy-in and develop consistent language and practices throughout the school and community.

In Our Schools: Steve’s Story

Steve is a middle school math teacher who is resistant to his school’s push for trauma-engaged practice. He has let everyone know that he does not believe trauma-engaged practice and social and emotional learning will help him teach math. He said he already has enough to do.

COMMON PRACTICE

The principal suggests Steve get on board, because this directive comes from above. Steve is resentful and is often withdrawn from the rest of the school staff except in meetings where he makes it difficult for his colleagues to put structures into place.

TRANSFORMATIVE PRACTICE

Steve’s colleagues ask questions and learn that Steve values student achievement and does not see a connection between student well-being and student achievement. Some of his colleagues work together to review student data and research on the impacts of trauma-engaged and social and emotional learning practices. In a subsequent planning meeting, another math teacher explains how integrating social and emotional learning has helped her students to work harder and take greater risks in a subject many students find difficult. A scientist at heart, Steve does more research and review, and over time goes from skeptic to willing partner. As the school staff talk through trauma-engaged research and school data, it becomes clear Steve feels confident teaching math but does not feel prepared to use trauma-engaged practices. His colleagues share their tools and resources, and Steve begins to take steps toward integrating trauma-engaged practices in his classroom.

Key Research Findings

Research suggests that education reform is more successful when there is broad buy-in and application of new ideas, policies and practices. A crucial factor in successful reform is to make programmatic change explicit. This provides an opportunity to check assumptions, review evidence, and develop a shared vision and language.

Whole-school approaches and whole-district approaches have greater impact and staying power than changes made in one class or unevenly within a district.¹ Integrated approaches provide developmentally appropriate experiences across grades and help students and families understand that expectations are consistent across the whole school and district. Developing this kind of integrated, consistent approach requires planning and collaboration.

Hallmarks of Effective Planning Processes

An effective planning process usually has the following attributes:

- ▶ **Collaboration** among administrators, school staff, families, community organizations and students to develop clear expectations, common language, clear tools, and common response strategies;
- ▶ **Intentionality** to ensure the work is rooted in a district or site's culture;
- ▶ **Theory of change** that outlines the key components of your schoolwide approach;
- ▶ Clearly communicated **rationale** to increase staff buy-in and reduce resistance to change;
- ▶ Honest, respectful, and productive **discussion** about strengths and gaps; and
- ▶ **Ongoing review**: Plan, Do, Reflect (Repeat).

A successful planning process results in the following key **outcomes**:

- ▶ A **clear road map** with timelines, milestones, and paths to get there;
- ▶ Clear **roles and responsibilities** for implementation;
- ▶ A **common understanding** of trauma-engaged language and communication strategies, whole-school supports, and key approaches and strategies;
- ▶ **Alignment** of policies, guidelines, handbooks, and practices; and
- ▶ A **process to establish norms, practices, and expectations together**.

Planning, Step by Step

Planning involves interconnected steps that can reinforce one another.

- ▶ **Preparation**: Invest some time to think about key aspects of your planning process.
- ▶ **Participants**: Ideally participants will reflect the diversity of the community. A team might include champions to help spread support, and family and community partners.
- ▶ **Time and location**: Determine how often the team will meet, and select meeting times and locations that are convenient for team members. Consider language accommodations if needed.
- ▶ **Facilitation**: Some planning teams prefer to use an external facilitator to help ensure all participants have a voice and keep the process moving.
- ▶ **Documentation**: Thorough documentation of the planning process builds credibility. Consider whether and how meetings will be recorded, transcribed, and shared.
- ▶ **Communication**: Consider how this process and its outcomes will be shared throughout the community. Consider tools such as district and school websites, social media, newsletters, newspapers and public radio.

Community Engagement and Outreach: Expand the planning team beyond school staff. Including community members provides important perspective and helps spread and embed trauma-engaged practice throughout a community. At any stage of development, plans can be an effective tool for facilitating communication.



Data and Information Review: Dedicate staff or contracted support to compile data, inventory strengths and gaps, and identify resources the community can tap. The following information may be helpful:

- ▶ school climate and youth risk behavior survey data,
- ▶ disciplinary trends,
- ▶ attendance trends,
- ▶ special education referrals,
- ▶ academic outcome measures (graduation rates, test scores, etc.),
- ▶ teacher turnover rates, and
- ▶ staff and family surveys.

Note: All data must be de-identified. If a population is big enough that data can be split out without compromising student privacy, data should be disaggregated in ways that help identify whether certain populations need additional supports.

Visioning: A visioning process can help bring consensus on a core goal. A shared vision serves as a guidepost to inspire the process and keep everyone on track through what can be a difficult journey.

Plan Development: To truly embed a whole-school approach to support resilience, some districts or schools establish a planning team, champion, and site-based action plan. These plans often lay out roles, activities, timelines, an inventory of resources needed and available, and ways to measure progress.

One way to work toward this plan is through a collective impact lens: what key **results** are you working toward, and what are key **indicators**, key **strategies**, and key **activities**?



Plans might consider the following:

- ▶ Understanding adverse childhood experiences, historical trauma and resilience
- ▶ Scheduling professional learning for trauma-engaged practices
- ▶ Support adults to integrate skill-building for students
- ▶ Highlighting and practicing adult modeling of social and emotional skills
- ▶ Incorporating schoolwide practices
- ▶ Weaving in developmentally appropriate social and emotional skill instruction for students
- ▶ Strengthening community and family partnerships
- ▶ Integrating local cultural practices
- ▶ Identifying individual supports and confidentiality needs
- ▶ Developing plans for integrating new staff and new initiatives into a trauma-engaged framework.

Consensus Building: Provide time and opportunities to build consensus among school staff, and to inform and develop natural champions and popular opinion leaders in the school and community. Hold conversations with skeptics as well as natural allies such as health, tribal, and community organizations committed to similar outcomes for children. Engaging community groups reinforces school efforts and can lead to formal relationships with partners to help heal trauma.

Consensus building often spreads through individuals sharing their perspectives on why a change is important to them. Listening is key. It is normal for there to be resistance to change. It can serve as a healthy part of the change process by spurring deeper conversations.

Some models such as CLEAR suggests at least 80 percent consensus among school staff is needed for success. Buy-in can be developed over time. The Culturally Responsive and Embedded Social and Emotional Learning (CRESEL) model suggests starting with district and site planning including school staff, students and the community to have a clear road map with clear actions for each year. These actions might shift policies and practices in the school.

1 Hunt, P. (2015) *A Whole-School Approach: Collaborative Development of School Health Policies, Processes and Practices*. *Journal of School Health*; 85(11): 802-809

“Planning is about reorienting the ship while sailing.”

—Alaska educator

Continuous Improvement: Plan, Do, Reflect, Repeat. Successful trauma-engaged practice is an ongoing process of planning, implementing, and reviewing results. Plans should identify what results are desired, what will be measured or evaluated, who will do the evaluation, and how often. Together the team can look at how widespread its efforts are, what difference these efforts are making, and what changes might further these impacts. *This requires a commitment of staff time for planning, ongoing training, and reflective practice.*

For evaluation purposes, the team should use the indicators selected during plan development. These indicators will likely be a subset of the data and information used at the outset of the process, and may include surveys of staff, students and families; student attendance; discipline data; and graduation rates. Additional tools will be available at <https://aasb.org/transformingschools/>

Leadership and Support Structures

Leadership and support structures are critical to effectively embed trauma-engaged practice within a district and schools, and to ensure that plans translate into action. There are several ways districts have approached this. Following are a few common structures and roles:

Leadership team: Districts may choose to establish or expand both district and school leadership teams to improve trauma-engaged plans and implementation. Leadership teams are natural champions to explain how and why trauma-engaged practice fits in to school and district goals. Participation on these teams should be voluntary.

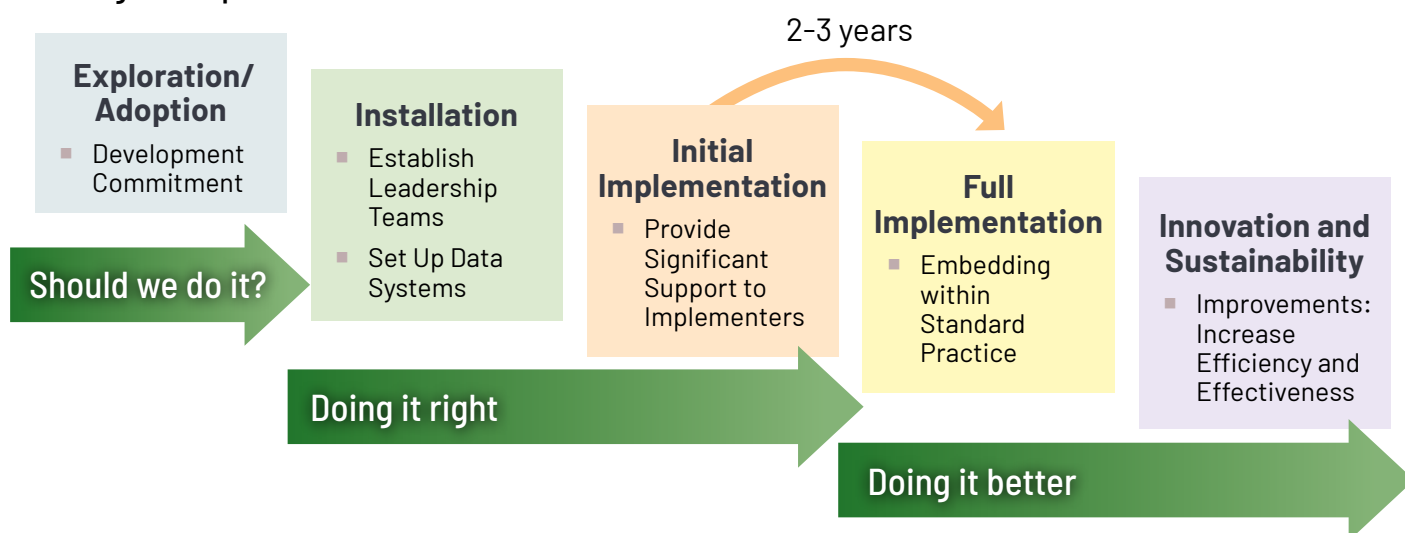
- ▶ To establish a district leadership team: Recruit leaders from administrative staff who would like to be part of a Trauma-Engaged Schools Administrative Leadership Team.
- ▶ To establish a school leadership team: Recruit individuals on staff who would like to be part of a Trauma-Engaged Schools Leadership Team. This team should include six to eight individuals reflecting broad representation of your school.

Collaborative team leadership: Here leadership teams are expanded, and may include school staff, community leaders, and youth. “Co-creation” helps build community support and ensure sustainability of trauma-engaged initiatives.

Champions: It is critical to have an individual or multiple individuals who spearhead this work, and hold the system accountable for continued progress and system-level change. The passion of a single person cannot carry this work alone, but it can drive momentum that might otherwise stagnate.

Support networks: Statewide learning communities or networks provide peer support and opportunities to reflect, plan and collaborate with other districts undertaking trauma-engaged transformation.

7. Stages of Implementation



Source: Adapted from PBIS.org



It's a Marathon, Not a Sprint

Change does not happen overnight. It takes sustained effort over time to establish effective plans, get buy-in, develop the leadership and infrastructure to support change, implement new practice, and continuously evaluate and improve these practices.

Steve's Story

In the scenario at the start of this chapter, Steve's colleagues helped bring Steve on board by asking questions to try to understand what was important to him, and to think about trauma-engaged work in light of Steve's values.

IDEAL OUTCOMES

Steve and his colleagues work together to develop a shared approach that includes a roadmap and action plan. School staff review components of the trauma-engaged framework and decide how to build a shared understanding, develop policies, integrate school practices, and build deeper relationships with students, families, and the community

Reflections:

- ▶ What opportunities have school staff and administrators had to develop a common understanding of trauma and their own role in transforming schools?
- ▶ Was data used in this process? If so, how? If not, what data might be helpful?
- ▶ What support do you need for this process to succeed?
- ▶ How can local and regional partners participate in planning processes? Who has been included and not included in the past?
- ▶ What kind of planning tool or supports would help school staff, community members, and student leaders undertake this work?
- ▶ Is there someone within the district or outside who has experience and tools to facilitate this process?
- ▶ How can your team compile information in a way that will be useful to communicate to others?

Suggested Steps:

1. **Consider building a small team** to determine how to approach this process.
2. **Have informal conversations** to gauge awareness and readiness for trauma-engaged policies and practices in your district or school. Include staff and families.
3. **Gather and analyze data and information.** If this is daunting, reach out to the Association of Alaska Schools Boards or Alaska Dept. of Education and Early Development for help gathering or analyzing data.
4. **Work through the process outlined in this chapter.** Customize the steps to fit your community's needs and style, following the broad principles of collaboration, intentionality, and discussion.

5 PROFESSIONAL LEARNING



“Adults have to know it and model it first.” –Alaska 5th grade teacher

SUMMARY School staff members often receive one-time training on topics; real and lasting change requires ongoing professional development and reflective practice. This chapter describes ongoing and embedded professional learning to transform schools through a trauma-engaged and community-responsive approach.

In Our Schools: In-service

Upon reviewing school district behavior data, school district leaders decide to address trauma-engaged practice as a professional learning topic.

COMMON PRACTICE The district provides a two-hour session on trauma-engaged practice to a handful of teachers at an in-service day. Teachers find it interesting, but daunting to put into practice.

TRANSFORMATIVE PRACTICE The district provides a day of training to all staff on culturally responsive trauma-engaged practices. Each school develops or uses an existing leadership team to plan the content for ongoing professional development throughout the school year. This deepens the learning from the in-service and becomes the main focus for professional learning over the course of the year. Trauma-engaged practices become a topic

during every building in-service to help all staff integrate holistic ways of supporting students. Educators use professional learning community (PLC) time twice per month to discuss and refine strengths-based practices. All staff focus on their schoolwide approaches bi-monthly during staff meetings. The school board and site-based council members also receive training so they can take an active role in engaging the community in the holistic approach.

***“Now that we have a common trauma-informed language, a conversation at lunch becomes a valuable brainstorming session. It has brought our staff closer together. We wanted [social and emotional learning] to help us change the culture in our school. We’ve realized that the change starts with us.*”**

–AK 5th Grade Teacher



Key Research Findings

Ongoing opportunities for learning and reflection are critical for all who work with students: school administration, teaching staff, paraprofessionals, support staff, afterschool providers, and community members. According to the Professional Learning Association, a 2017 survey found that effective professional learning boosted both educator effectiveness and student learning.¹ This learning is more effective when staff have opportunities to combine theoretical knowledge with practical experience.²

What should districts focus on? When it comes to positively impacting students, research suggests something very simple may be the most important factor: belief. A 2016 meta-analysis found that staff collective efficacy – belief that through shared actions, the school and community team can positively influence outcomes for students – is the factor that most influences student achievement.³

Professional learning for trauma-engaged schools should focus not only on effective practice, but on cultivating a shared faith that together the school community can make a difference.

In addition, for trauma-engaged practice, researchers suggest adults need guided opportunities to develop their own social and emotional competencies. Chris Blodgett, of the CLEAR model, calls this “*placing teachers at the center of practice*”⁴ because adult self-regulation skills are a foundation for success.

Transformative Professional Learning

Many teachers in Alaska say they are not prepared to integrate trauma-engaged approaches in culturally responsive ways. Further, frequent migration of teachers in and out of Alaskan communities can have a stop-and-start effect that makes it difficult for schools to move past implementation barriers. Embedding professional learning in school practices can help overcome these barriers.

Professional learning should apply to all adults in the school community. Everyone in a school community has a role – and needs to believe they have a role – in supporting students. This might include Tribes and Elders, superintendent, principals, families, teachers, counselors, specialists, community organizations, bus drivers, custodians, paraprofessionals, support staff, classified staff, cafeteria staff, safety officer, front office staff, recess supervisors, sports coaches, after-school activity providers, and school board members.

Effective learning is integrated with one’s work. Ongoing and embedded professional learning enables staff to make direct connections between their learning, their experience on the job, and district initiatives.

Alaska educators and national experts suggest professional learning for trauma-engaged practice address topics such as:

- ▶ Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and inequities in Alaska and the impact on learning
- ▶ Historical and intergenerational impacts of trauma
- ▶ Cultural strength, resilience, and multi-generational models for healing
- ▶ Relationship-building with students, staff, families and community
- ▶ Adult social-emotional skills (e.g., collaboration, conflict resolution, consensus building)
- ▶ Schoolwide practices that create physical, emotional, cultural and academic safety
- ▶ Helping students develop self-regulation and social-emotional skills
- ▶ Resources and community partnerships for helping students with specific trauma (e.g., parent in jail, military deployment, alcohol and drugs, violence)
- ▶ How students’ trauma impacts school staff and staff self-care

Keeping Children Safe: Mandatory Reporting

Trauma-engaged approaches ensure that all educators and staff are equipped with the knowledge and skills to support student safety. As part of a schoolwide approach to supporting the whole child, all school staff should receive training on the recognition and reporting of child abuse and neglect.

Under Alaska law, teachers, administrators, counselors, athletic coaches and child care providers are required to report if they “have reasonable cause to suspect that a child has suffered harm as a result of child abuse or neglect.” These staff are required to receive training on mandatory reporting.⁵

1 [Learning Forward: The Professional Learning Association](#) (website).

2 Croft, A., et al. (2010) [Job-Embedded Professional Development: What It Is, Who Is Responsible, And How to Get It Done Well](#), National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, Issue Brief, p. 8.

3 Hattie, J. (2009) *Visible Learning for Teachers: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement*. New York, NY: Routledge. Updated 2016.

4 Blodgett, C. (2017) *A Selected Review of Trauma-Informed School Practice and Alignment with Educational Practice*, CLEAR Trauma Center.

5. [Alaska Statute 47.17](#)

Professional Learning Formats and Delivery Models

Supportive school districts prioritize time for intentionally structured learning and collaboration. Creating a growth-oriented adult culture for trauma-engaged practice can happen in many ways. Below are a variety of formats for professional learning. ***How will your district create an on-going and integrated professional learning plan for your school learning community?***

- ▶ **Professional learning communities (PLC):** structured collaboration time with identified outcomes for student learning and engagement
- ▶ **Coaching and observation:** peer coaching and classroom observation or instructional coach position
- ▶ **Peer support:** teachers meet to analyze each other's work and discuss challenges
- ▶ **Consultant model:** work with consultants to tailor trauma-engaged approaches and coaching
- ▶ **Community dialogue:** structure ongoing authentic conversations among stakeholders – school, community, families, Tribe (e.g., First Alaskans Institute's Advancing Native Dialogue On Race and Equity)
- ▶ **State-wide education conferences:** participants return and share their learning
- ▶ **In-service:** district-wide and site-based training that is reinforced in PLCs or staff meetings in ongoing ways

Second Order Change

One program focused on strengthening adult understanding of self-regulation skills and other social-emotional competency is the community-based Second Order Change Initiative led by the Anchorage Youth Development Coalition. The initiative helps adults who work with youth gain deeper awareness of their social and emotional intelligence. Staff with greater awareness and management of their self-regulation skills are able to better support children who have experienced trauma.

- ▶ **Staff meetings:** structured meetings with time dedicated to trauma-engaged practice on a regular basis
- ▶ **Book studies:** offer credit for book studies or classes through UAA Professional and Continuing Education (PACE)
- ▶ **Online classes or webinars:** staff can take an online class or webinar series together through the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development e-learning modules or the Alaska Staff Development Network

"We need authentic ongoing conversations to integrate training with agencies, tribes, K-12, early childhood and more. Our teachers need time to participate in reflective practice including local cultural activities."

-Alaska school board member

Authentic Learning with Families and the Community

To effectively support students, it is important for families and school staff to share knowledge with one another. By partnering with communities and families, schools align trauma-engaged approaches with community values and strengthen the place-based cultural dimensions of learning and teaching.

Community partners can teach school staff about cultural values, local place-based knowledge, governance structures, sexual assault and domestic violence, and more. Community partners can also link school staff to local and tribal government resources and protocols. This kind of authentic partnership means learning from and with the community. [See chapters on Cultural Integration & Community Co-Creation and Family Partnership for more.]

Shared learning experiences build skills in both the school and community, and strengthen relationships, trust and collective efficacy.

Professional Learning in Action: In-service

The Anchorage School District coordinated a day of learning with the community in November 2017 that focused on trauma-engaged and culturally sensitive practice:

- ▶ The training used a series of videos developed by the district and its partners.
- ▶ All 66 elementary schools invited parents, community members, and business partners into the schools to learn together. As one of the most diverse districts in the nation, district leaders felt it was important to have community members present to share their stories and perspectives.
- ▶ Schools provided lunch for all participants to build relationships and keep the conversation going over a shared meal.

“Watching the modules together prompted discussion among school staff, community members, and families.”

Anchorage School District staff member

IDEAL OUTCOMES

The conversation will go on long after the day of shared learning, and will strengthen connections among school staff and the community. Shared understanding of trauma and of ways to support resilience fosters a more supportive and connected community within and beyond the schools.



Suggested Steps

1. **Assess your district and school professional learning practice.** Is it connected, embedded and collaborative, or top-down, “one and done”?
2. **Inventory the opportunities** in the district and at school to learn about trauma-engaged practice in a sequenced way throughout the year.
3. **Inventory staff beliefs and knowledge** about trauma. Meet staff where they are and build on staff strengths.
4. **Create a professional learning plan** and timeline based on staff readiness. Connect learning to a shared vision and goals for transforming your school. Strive for learning that relates directly to each position.
5. **Learn together:** Create a model where the whole school, all district and school staff, can learn, share, and reflect together.
6. **Collaborate with the community** (families, Elders, Tribe, support services) to design community-based and culturally-responsive professional learning.
7. **Invite families and community members** to learn together.
8. **Track and evaluate growth.** Consider building in tracking and evaluation to assess progress.

Reflections

- ▶ How do you as a district or as a school staff learn, plan and reflect together to improve student learning?
- ▶ How can your school community move toward a shared belief that together you can positively impact student outcomes?
- ▶ What is the current state of staff knowledge, beliefs, and skills with respect to trauma-engaged practice?
- ▶ What kind of professional learning would be helpful to you with respect to transforming trauma?
- ▶ How does your school or district collaborate with the community (families, Elders, Tribe, support services) to deliver culturally-responsive professional learning?
- ▶ How can your school model a community-wide approach and learn together with families and community?

Key Terms

Collective efficacy: A belief that, through collective actions, a group of people can influence student outcomes and increase achievement.

Professional learning: Effective professional learning refers to structured professional development that results in changes in teacher practices and improvements in student learning outcomes.

6 SCHOOLWIDE PRACTICES AND CLIMATE



“Positive school climate and connectedness is not a program but a way of engaging in the world. How do we make this the foundation of all of our interactions?” –Alaska school counselor

SUMMARY Trauma-engaged schools cannot be transformed by one person or in one classroom. Schools that are truly trauma-engaged support efforts in and outside of the classroom. These efforts are coordinated across classrooms and in all aspects of the school community to create an environment where students feel safe and supported.

In Our Schools: Mary’s Story

Mary, a third grader, has started to tell her teacher and the school nurse that her stomach hurts and she wants to go home. She is frequently absent from school and is falling behind academically. Mary, who is overweight, is often teased about her weight by her peers.

COMMON PRACTICE Her teacher and the school nurse dismiss Mary’s stomach complaints as excuses to leave the classroom or get out of school. The teacher requires her to stay in for recess to make up missed work.

TRANSFORMATIVE PRACTICE Mary’s teacher and school nurse recognize that there may be more at play. The nurse talks to Mary, and learns that Mary’s father died last year. Mary’s mother has bouts of ill health and Mary worries her mother will die. The teacher, nurse, school counselor and principal work together with Mary’s mother to make a plan to address Mary’s needs and ensure she can make up work without missing valuable play and social time at recess. The school master schedule includes time for social and emotional skill instruction for all grade levels and has older students in a leadership role. Peer mediators from the upper grades use restorative practices to build empathy with students who teased Mary, to repair relationships and make school a safer place for Mary and her peers.

Key Research Findings

Research consistently shows that positive student and staff perceptions of their school climate are linked to increased student academic achievement and graduation rates; increased staff job satisfaction and decreased student risk behaviors.¹ Positive school climate is good for graduation rates and reducing many negative indicators including dropout rates, violence, alcohol and drug use, and school absences. It is not just students. When staff members feel supported by administration, they report higher levels of commitment and job satisfaction.²

Data from Alaska’s School Climate and Connectedness Survey, which surveys students in grades 3-12 across the state, show similar patterns. For example, 64 percent of students who received mostly As reported feeling close to adults at school, while only 42 percent of students who received mostly Ds and Fs reported feeling close to adults at school. Similarly, students who reported feeling close to adults reported fewer unexcused absences; and students who reported positive perceptions of school climate had better grades and fewer unexcused absences.

Why Schoolwide Practices?

Trauma violates physical, social, and emotional safety, and can result in feeling threatened and alert to risk. For students who have experienced trauma, having core safety needs met in a stable and predictable environment can minimize stress reactions. This frees students to focus on learning.

Schoolwide practices make it clear that everyone in the school community has a role and responsibility in creating a safe and respectful learning environment. **Schoolwide practices** refer to routines, structures, and strategies that are agreed upon and used across the school throughout the school day.

Schoolwide practices help establish a school’s climate. The National School Climate Center describes **school climate** as “the quality and character of school life, the foundation for learning and positive youth development.” Every school has a climate, and everyone in the school contributes to it. It can be described as warm or cool, safe or unsafe. Many say you can actually feel a welcome and positive school climate as you enter a school, creating a sense of safety and belonging.

Climate & Schoolwide Practices

A goal of the Safety and Well-Being committee of Alaska’s Education Challenge is to create sustainable and positive school climates that are safe, supportive, and engaging for all students, families, staff, and communities. This aligns with the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which recognizes the strong link between positive school climate and student learning.

Figure 8 lists the measures of Alaska’s School Climate and Connectedness Survey that contribute to safe and connected school climates (This survey differs by grade band 3-5 or 6-12. The family survey was new in 2018).

8. School Climate and Connectedness Scales

Students	Staff*	Family (new in 2018)
Respectful Climate Caring Adults Peer Climate High Expectations Student Involvement Family and Community Involvement School Safety Cultural Connectedness (grades 6-12) Community Support (grades 6-12 only) Social and Emotional Learning Observed Risk Behaviors (grades 6-12 only) Caring Others (grades 3-5 only)	Student (Peer) Climate Family and Community Involvement School Leadership and Involvement Staff Attitudes Student Involvement School Safety Cultural Connectedness Observed Student Risk Behaviors	Cultural Connectedness Family and Community Involvement Communication Student Support at Home Family Engagement at School Opportunities for Involvement

Source: Association of Alaska School Boards, *School Climate and Connectedness Survey*

Trauma-engaged learning environments allow students to bring their culture and whole selves to school. Focus areas for schoolwide practices include

- ▶ Safe, predictable and supportive learning environments;
- ▶ Practices to increase students' and adults' resilience and coping skills; and
- ▶ Focus on relationships.

Trauma-engaged schools transform a paradigm where educators operate in isolation into a paradigm of shared responsibility. In a trauma-engaged school, educators make the switch from asking, "What can I do to fix this child?" to asking, "What can we do to help all children feel safe and participate fully in our school learning community?"³

Students also play an important role in school climate. As one Alaska school board member said: *"We need to encourage student input. Youth can be leaders in prevention and peer mentoring."* The Bering Strait Youth Leaders program is an example of such an effort [see sidebar].

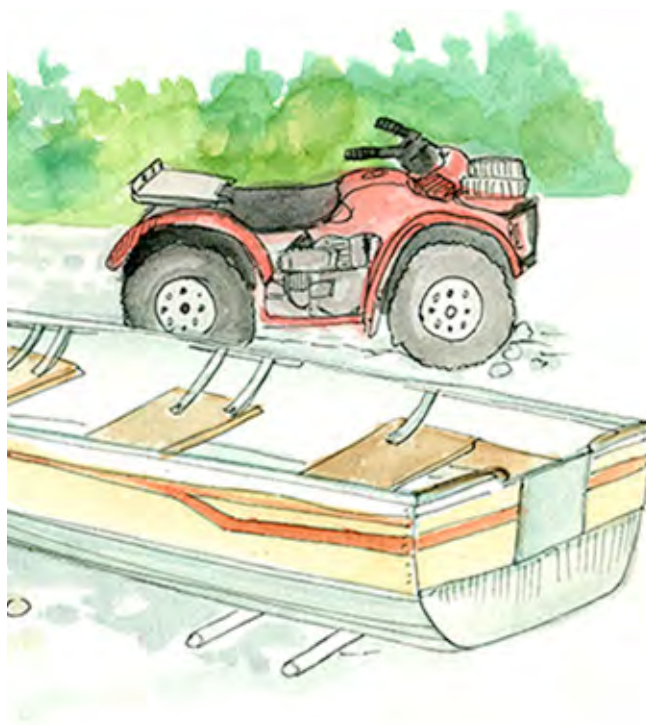
Bering Strait Youth Leaders

The Bering Strait School District helps students strengthen school climate through its Youth Leaders program.

Each year, 50 to 60 youth from across the Bering Straits region attend a two-day youth leadership training. They learn about peer helper skills such as listening, bullying and suicide prevention, referral skills, confidentiality, communication techniques, and self-care, all with the regional cultures in focus. Youth Leaders look at their school's School Climate and Connectedness Survey results and build action plans to improve climate, with help from Association of Alaska School Boards staff.

Back in their home communities, Youth Leaders meet regularly with an adult mentor for guidance and support as they serve their peers, younger students, schools and communities. Activities may include sharing goals, hosting healing circles, providing peer support and suicide intervention.

Transforming practices can be as simple as saying "hello."



1 O'Brennan, L. & Bradshaw, C. (2013). The [Importance of School Climate](#). Research Brief by Johns Hopkins Center for the Prevention of Youth Violence for the National Education Association.

2 *Ibid.*

3 Cole, S.F., et al. (2009). [Helping Traumatized Children Learn](#). Boston, MA: Massachusetts Advocates for Children.

Cultural Connectedness

When schools value the language and culture of families; teach the history and culture of students, and represent students’ culture in the school environment, it impacts school climate and academic achievement. In 2018, 48 percent of Alaska students in grades 6-12 taking the School Climate and Connectedness Survey reported positive perceptions of cultural identity, cultural responsiveness/sensitivity and instructional equity in their school. A stronger sense of cultural connectedness is correlated with higher grades, as the chart below shows.

Of students who reported receiving mostly A’s, 51 percent reported feeling a strong sense of cultural connectedness. Of students receiving mostly D’s and F’s, 37 percent reported feeling a strong sense of cultural connectedness. A stronger sense of connectedness is also correlated to fewer unexcused absences.

These links underscore the importance of valuing the language and culture of families in the school community; teaching the history and culture of people who live in the community; and representing culture in the school environment. Partnerships with the community can help strengthen a school’s sense of cultural connectedness. See Cultural Connectedness & Community Co-Creation chapter.

Safe, Predictable and Supportive Learning Environments

Following are some specific ways schools can create optimal learning environments for students.

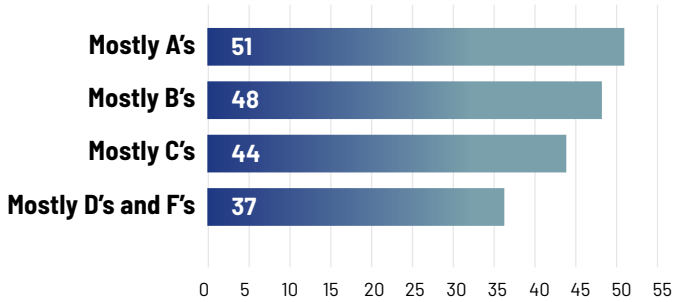
Safe Spaces: The school develops and designates quiet and safe spaces inside and outside the classroom for students to find calm and balance, or to self-regulate when experiencing behavioral and emotional challenges.

Positive Behavior Supports: Suspending students usually fails to help them develop the skills and strategies they need to improve their behavior and avoid future problems⁴. Alaska’s Education Challenge notes that a growing awareness of the impact of trauma compels us to find alternatives that reduce disciplinary actions that remove students from the classroom. Positive behaviors need to be taught, supported, and modeled.⁵

Alaskans who helped create this framework suggest schools

- ▶ Provide positive behavioral supports to students in ways that nurture relationships and reflect caring;
- ▶ Collaborate with community and families to align school discipline with traditional cultural or community-guided discipline and values;
- ▶ Strive to use consistent and predictable staff responses and restorative practices;
- ▶ Set clear expectations, routines, and plans for transitions;
- ▶ Use common language and points of reference;
- ▶ Implement disciplinary procedures in an equitable way;
- ▶ Coordinate support services with a student’s family and give referrals as needed; and
- ▶ Reinforce and model self-regulation skills and mindfulness strategies.

9. Cultural Connectedness Scale Chart



Source: Association of Alaska School Boards, *School Climate and Connectedness Survey*

Restorative Practices: Restorative practices should be embedded in disciplinary protocols and can even be embedded into school district policies. Restorative practices serve staff and students best when the practices are integrated into daily routines to promote healthy relationships and social connection, classroom management and disciplinary protocols.

Restorative practices are also useful to navigate difficult situations or times when students have broken school rules. Rather than “failing the test,” restorative practices focus on repairing harm, restoring relationships, and building empathy. This is different than common practices that focus largely on the rule broken.⁶

Support in Action: Mary’s Story

In the story at the start of this chapter, third-grade Mary reports stomach aches at school. Instead of dismissing her complaints, staff in a transformative school recognize that belly pain can be a symptom of stress or anxiety. Here are the steps her school takes:

- ▶ Her classroom teacher takes her complaints seriously and expresses compassion: “I’m sorry your belly is hurting again – let’s go to the nurse and see if we can get you some help.”
- ▶ The school nurse delves deeper to determine what is bothering Mary. Mary feels supported and heard by the teacher and school nurse. This is a first step in healing.

- ▶ The nurse shares with Mary’s teacher, the principal and counselor that Mary is processing her father’s death, her mother’s illness, and teasing by peers.
- ▶ The principal reaches out to Mary’s mother and suggests a meeting. She asks Mary’s mother if there are other supportive adults who might like to participate, and follows up by inviting an uncle who is a key support to Mary.
- ▶ Together the family and school make a plan to support Mary and to keep lines of communication open.
- ▶ The school trains student leaders to improve the school climate. Natural helpers or student leaders work with the younger students to change the peer climate of bullying.
- ▶ Over time the school implements workshops for staff and parents. The school staff create morning meetings to focus on relationship building, connectedness, and positive climate.
- ▶ All staff, including recess and lunch monitors, are included to help build a more supportive community that does not tolerate bullying.

IDEAL OUTCOMES

Mary’s stomach aches begin to lessen as the school and her family acknowledge her anxiety and support her more actively. She misses less classroom time and less recess time. With more social-emotional learning happening in the school, over time the school climate improves, and the teasing Mary and others experience becomes far less frequent.

“Mary is better able to learn, and her peers gain better social-emotional skills.”



4 U.S. Department of Education. (2014). [Guiding Principles: A Resource Guide for Improving School Climate and Discipline](#) (p. ii).

5 Alaska Department of Education & Early Development (2018). [Alaska's Education Challenge Report](#) (p. 26).

6 San Francisco United School District. [Restorative Practices](#) (web page).

Suggested Steps

1. **Assess the current school climate** using Alaska's School Climate and Connectedness Survey and other information that may be available.
2. **Include social-emotional learning skill instruction** in the master schedule for all grade levels.
3. **Review existing behavior supports** and discipline policies and practices.
4. **Inventory the physical space** for opportunity to create physically, emotionally and culturally safe spaces.
5. **Bring together stakeholders** such as families, Elders, Tribes, support services, youth, and school staff to create a shared vision and goals for improving school climate and connectedness.
6. **Collaborate with the community** to design school discipline practices that are consistent with traditional, cultural, or community values.

Reflections

- ▶ What activities does your school do to build intentional school climates?
- ▶ Who else could be involved in school climate-building activities?
- ▶ How do students, staff and families perceive your school climate?
- ▶ How can your school embed restorative practices?
- ▶ How does your school or district use youth as leaders to build a positive school climate?
- ▶ How does your classroom's or school's physical space promote a sense of emotional and physical safety?
- ▶ How does your school or district collaborate with the community (families, Elders, Tribe, support services, volunteers) to create a positive school climate?
- ▶ How do district policies support schoolwide climate-building practices?

Key Terms

School climate: The quality and character of school life; every school has a climate, and everyone in the school contributes to it.

Schoolwide practices: Routines, structures, and strategies that are agreed upon and used across the school throughout the school day.



7 SKILL INSTRUCTION



“Social and Emotional Learning is making a difference for our students. We have happy learners – students who can focus on academics because they’re not sidetracked by a lot of other issues. Our test scores are higher and we have fewer office referrals.”

–Alaska elementary school principal

SUMMARY

Schools have an opportunity to build skills with students throughout the school day. This chapter addresses core skills that build resilience and help students engage in learning.

In Our Schools: Devon’s Story

Devon is a 2nd grader who lashes out with very little provocation. He trips his classmates when he is angry, and is quick to raise his fists.

COMMON RESPONSE

Devon is sent to the principal’s office repeatedly. Eventually he is suspended for a day and his family is warned that his behavior is unacceptable. His behavior does not improve and he is at risk of being expelled.

TRANSFORMATIVE RESPONSE

Devon’s teacher finds a quiet time to talk with him. When she asks why he is so angry, he has difficulty explaining. She arranges for him to talk to the school counselor and Devon is able to share that in the past, he witnessed violence between his father and his father’s former girlfriend. School staff work together to support Devon through skill building both in the classroom and individually. Because Devon’s whole class is learning self-management and calming techniques, the students practice and model the skills for each other. School staff also work with Devon individually to deepen and practice skills to help him manage frustration, communicate effectively, and understand his decision-making.

Key Research Findings

A review of the research literature by Duke University concludes that skill development is key to mitigating impacts of stress and trauma.¹ A key factor common to competent children – including those in adverse conditions – is the ability to self-regulate attention, emotions, and behaviors.² Development of social-emotional competencies in early childhood is correlated with improved learning and academic success, mental health, and general well-being.³

Social-emotional skills can be taught. A 2011 research review found that students in social and emotional learning (SEL) programs demonstrated improved self-management skills, positive social behaviors, fewer conduct problems, and less emotional distress compared to a control group. Academic performance was also significantly improved, with an 11 percentage point difference between groups on standardized scores.⁴

The effects last. Ongoing research shows that 3.5 years after social-emotional skill instruction, students performed better on standardized tests than their peers who did not have SEL instruction. Behavior problems, emotional distress, and drug use were significantly lower for students exposed to SEL programs; and development of social and emotional skills and positive attitudes toward self, others, and school were higher.⁵ These students also had higher high school and college graduation rates; and were less likely to have a mental health disorder, or become involved with the juvenile justice system.

Structured afterschool programs provide students with an additional opportunity to learn and practice social-emotional skills. Programs that deliberately focus on social-emotional skill development have been linked

to improved academics and reduced risk behavior. One preliminary study of the Anchorage School District's Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that students who participated in quality afterschool programs at least two days a week were 28% less likely to miss class without permission, 18% less likely to use alcohol, and 39% less likely to use marijuana.⁶

Self-Regulation and Co-Regulation

When students experience toxic levels of stress, their “flight, fight or freeze” responses are activated. Being on this kind of alert all the time inhibits performance in school and in life. Learning to regulate one’s emotional responses is key to coping with stressors. These skills can be taught.

Emotional self-regulation is the ability to manage one’s emotions and behavior. It includes not overreacting to upsetting stimuli, calming yourself down when you get upset, adjusting to unexpected change, and handling frustration without an outburst. It is a set of skills that enables people to direct their own behavior towards a goal, despite the unpredictability of the world and our own feelings.

Self-regulation can be disrupted by prolonged or pronounced stress and adversity. It can also be strengthened and taught, particularly through “co-regulation” with parents or other adults.⁷

Co-regulation refers to the way a person adjusts their emotions and behavior through interaction with another person, in order to maintain or regain a regulated state. When adults provide warm and responsive interactions, they support, coach, and model emotional self-regulation. Keeping a student’s cultural context in mind is critical.

Social and Emotional Learning

Social and emotional learning enhances students’ capacity to deal effectively and ethically with daily tasks and challenges. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has identified five core competencies:

- ▶ **Self awareness** is the ability to accurately recognize one’s own emotions, thoughts, and values; and the ability to accurately assess one’s strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and a “growth mindset.”
- ▶ **Self management** is the ability to successfully regulate one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations – effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, and motivating one-self – and the ability to set and work toward personal and career goals. We develop these through instruction and practice, values, and observation.

Flipping Your Lid

Watch Dan Siegel’s “Flipping Your Lid: A Scientific Explanation” hand model of the brain on YouTube. Siegel uses a simple visual and kinesthetic illustration to show what happens when the “flight, fight or freeze” response is triggered. When we get upset, the emotional part of the brain takes over and flips the thinking and problem-solving part of the brain out of the way.

Consider Sarah’s Story in Deconstructing Trauma (Chapter 2). Sarah’s support plan includes developing the skills to regulate her emotional brain. This allows her to access her thinking brain and engage in learning. As a result, Sarah feels safer and more in control, and can spend more time learning.

10: Local Traditional Values Embedded in Social and Emotional Learning Standards

SEL Competencies	Hydaburg City School District Haida Connection	Lower Yukon School District Yup'ik Value Dimension
Self-Awareness	Respect for self, self-help, self-sufficiency, hold yourself up, responsibility for self	Respect for self, knowledge of family tree, humor, respect for nature and animals
Self-Management	Never hold self above another, be humble	Listening, humility, hard work, domestic skills
Social Awareness	Treat children and elders with special care and conduct, Never harm another, Only take what is needed	Respect for Elders and others, love for children, compassion, family roles, helping others
Social Management	Respect for each other, the land, the water, and the air, be caretaker of this world	Sharing, cooperation, community wellness, spirituality

Association of Alaska School Boards, Hydaburg City School District, Lower Yukon School District.

- ▶ **Social awareness** is the ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures; and the ability to understand social and ethical norms for behavior. In many cultures that are collectivist in nature, individuals adjust their own behaviors to meet the expectations of other people and social relations.
- ▶ **Responsible decision-making** is the ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms as well as a realistic evaluation of consequences, and consideration of the well-being of oneself and others.
- ▶ **Relationship skills** are the ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups and the ability to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek and offer help when needed.

Many school districts have developed standards for social and emotional learning skills, including sample activities. These standards provide a common language for a school and community to engage in conversation about these skills.

Traditional Values and Community Partnerships

Community values can provide a meaningful foundation for self-regulation and social-emotional skill development. Using students' cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and frames of reference makes learning more effective.⁸ **Figure 10** shows how two districts modified social and emotional learning standards from the Anchorage School District to align with their local traditional values.

Community collaboration is key to making social and emotional learning place-based and relevant for students. Community partners can teach and reinforce self-regulation and social-emotional skills through subsistence activities, like butchering a moose, and through sharing traditional stories and language. Local or regional health organizations and nonprofits can also be a resource for skill instruction and practice.

- 1 Murray, D.W., et al. (2015). [Self-Regulation and Toxic Stress Report 4: Implications for Programs and Practice](#). OPRE Report # 2016-97, Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- 2 Cole, S.F. et al. (2009) [Helping Traumatized Children Learn](#), Boston, MA: Massachusetts Advocates for Children.
- 3 Rhoades, B.L., et al. (2011) [Examining the link between preschool social-emotional competence and first grade academic achievement: The role of attention skills](#). Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 26(2): 182-191; Shonkoff, J. & Phillips D. (2000) [From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development](#), Washington, DC: National Academies Press (US); and Zins, J.E. et al. (2004) [The Scientific Base Linking Social and Emotional Learning to School Success](#). In J. E. Zins, R. P. Weissberg, M. C. Wang, & H. J. Walberg (Eds.), [Building academic success on social and emotional learning: What does the research say?](#) (pp. 3-22). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- 4 Durlak, J.A., et al. (2011) [The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A metaanalysis of school-based universal interventions](#). Child Development, 82: 405-432.
- 5 Taylor, R. et al. (2017) [Promoting Positive Youth Development Through School-Based Social and Emotional Learning Interventions: A Meta-Analysis of Follow-Up Effects](#), Child Development, 88(4):1156-1171.
- 6 McDowell Group (2018) [Protective Factors for Youth Substance Abuse and Delinquency: The Role of Afterschool Programs](#), Prepared for Alaska Afterschool Network.
- 7 Child Mind Institute. (undated) [How Can We Help Kids With Self-Regulation?](#) (blogpost)
- 8 Kalyanpur, M. (2003) [A challenge to professionals: Developing cultural reciprocity with culturally diverse families](#), Focal Point, 17(1): 1-6; Bazron, B. et al. (2005) [Creating Culturally Responsive Schools, Educational Leadership](#), 63(1): 83-84; Guèvremont, A. & Kohen, D.E. (2012) [Knowledge of an Aboriginal language and school outcomes for children and adults](#), International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, 15(1): 1-27.

Direct Skill Instruction

Just as students can learn math skills, social and emotional skills can be taught and practiced.

Researchers have found the most effective social-emotional learning approaches have four common attributes, abbreviated as **SAFE**:⁹

- ▶ **Sequenced**: a connected and coordinated set of activities to support skill development;
- ▶ **Active**: active forms of learning to help youth learn new skills;
- ▶ **Focused**: at least one component devoted to developing personal or social skills; and,
- ▶ **Explicit**: targets specific SEL skills rather than positive development in general terms.

Additional findings indicate that the most effective SEL skill instruction format is educators using evidence-based methods in the classroom.¹⁰ Some school districts in Alaska are beginning to adapt evidence-based approaches for various cultural contexts.

SEL Instructional Practices

Integrating skill development and practice into academic content enhances engagement and the learning process. The American Institutes for Research (AIR) has identified ten instructional strategies, including cooperative learning, that can be used in classrooms to support positive learning environments, social-emotional competencies, and academic learning.¹¹

Teaching the skills required for collaboration is key to successful cooperative learning. A conversation with students about the skills they need to work effectively in groups makes the social-emotional learning skills visible. Some Alaska districts have adopted cooperative learning approaches district-wide in all K-12 classrooms.

Choosing a Curriculum

There are many social and emotional learning programs and curricula. Each community has different needs and strengths and should choose an appropriate approach. CASEL offers two guides for choosing an evidence-based approach. A 2017 guide from the Wallace Foundation also provides information on SEL approaches with considerations for adapting approaches to the afterschool setting.

Employment Connection

Social and emotional skills are a priority for Alaskan employers. In the document “Want a Great Career?”, the Alaska Process Industry Career Consortium describes the social-emotional skills Alaskan employers expect:

Attitudes such as positive outlook, willingness to learn, and respect for others;

Skills and competencies including communication and problem solving; and

Work ethic including honesty and integrity.

Other opportunities to practice SEL skills include:

- ▶ Morning meetings at elementary schools and advisory classes in secondary schools;
- ▶ Peer education with youth leaders teaching social-emotional skills (e.g. Natural Helpers);
- ▶ Specialists reinforcing social-emotional skills during gym, art, music, library;
- ▶ Schoolwide practices such as the Zones of Regulation¹² curriculum or safe zones;
- ▶ Techniques such as “brain breaks”, breathing, stretching, yoga, and pressure points; and
- ▶ Afterschool activities and sports.

As with any instructional area, assessment is important. Measuring and assessing students’ self-regulation and SEL skills can help districts and schools identify which supports students need and how effective those supports are. American Institutes for Research provides a resource for choosing an assessment tool to measure district or school SEL outcomes.¹³

Skill-Building in Action: Devon’s Story

In the scenario at the start of this chapter, Devon had difficulty regulating his emotions and his behavior. In a trauma-engaged school, a response might look like this:

- ▶ His teacher, weary of punitive responses that have no effect, reaches out to Devon in a calm moment when both teacher and student are not agitated.
- ▶ Recognizing Devon needs additional support, the teacher involves the school counselor, who meets with Devon and learns more about what’s going on for him.

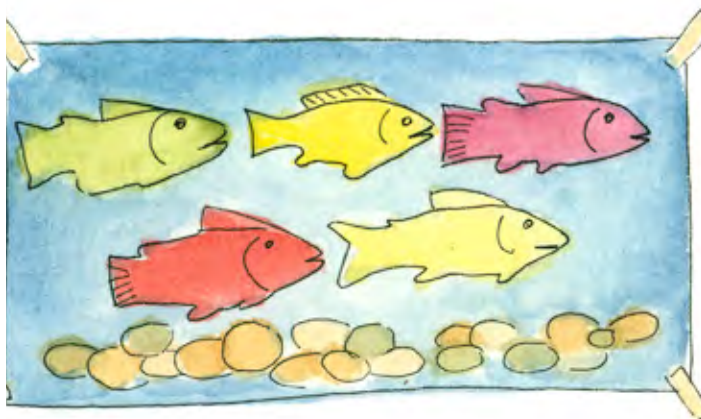
Infusing Social-Emotional Learning into Academic Content

Social interaction is a fundamental aspect of learning. The Edutopia Foundation (edutopia.org) spotlights what is working in education, including videos and resources about cooperative learning. “Deeper Learning: A Collaborative Classroom Is Key” suggests five activities to bring deep, meaningful collaboration in any academic content area:

- ▶ Establish group agreements
 - ▶ Teach how to listen
 - ▶ Teach the art of asking good questions
 - ▶ Teach how to negotiate
 - ▶ Model expectations
-
- ▶ The teacher and counselor along with the principal coordinate a team response for Devon that includes supports in and out of school.
 - ▶ The class – and ideally the whole school – implements social and emotional skill instruction to help all students improve their ability to manage their emotions and behaviors, and so students can model and reinforce each other’s skill development.

IDEAL OUTCOMES

Devon’s anger and outbursts do not go away, but they become less frequent as Devon gains self-awareness and gradually improves his self-regulation skills. His teacher and classmates learn better self-regulation and learn to better support and communicate with each other. The class is ultimately able to spend more time learning with fewer behavioral challenges.



Suggested Steps

1. **Adopt learning standards** for self-regulation and social and emotional skills.
2. **Make place-based and cultural modifications** to these standards in collaboration with the community.
3. **Inventory current programs** and approaches to teaching students self-regulation and social and emotional skills. Build on strengths and identify gaps.
4. **Adopt evidence-based approaches** to augment existing programs.
5. **Include social-emotional learning instruction** in the master schedule for all grades.
6. **Design and facilitate professional learning** for all staff on the standards, direct instruction approach, and ways to integrate social and emotional skill practice into academics.
7. **Reinforce skill development** by collaborating with after-school activity providers, coaches, youth organizations and families.

9 Meta-analysis by Durlak, et al. (2011). See footnote 4.

10 *Ibid.*

11 Yoder, N. (2014) [*Teaching the whole child: Instructional practices that support social emotional learning in three teacher evaluation frameworks*](#). Washington, DC: Center on Great Teachers and Leaders, American Institutes for Research.

12 Kuypers, L. Zones of Regulation: [*A Framework to Foster Self-Regulation and Emotional Control*](#), website.

13 American Institutes for Research. (2015) [*Are You Ready to Assess Social and Emotional Development?*](#) toolkit.

Reflections

- ▶ What social-emotional skills (traditional or community values, employability skills, etc.) are important to your community?
- ▶ How do you partner with the community to integrate these skills throughout the school day?
- ▶ How does your school or district teach self-regulation and social-emotional skills?
- ▶ How are these skills reinforced in academics and throughout the school day?
- ▶ What are staff beliefs about their role in teaching self-regulation and social-emotional skills?
- ▶ How can adults in the school community develop the skills to co-regulate with students and model SEL skills?
- ▶ How does your district or school partner with out-of-school activity providers (afterschool, sports, etc.) to reinforce SEL skill development?
- ▶ What ideas in this chapter make the most sense for your community?

Key Terms

Emotional self-regulation: The ability to manage one's emotions and behavior. It includes not overreacting to upsetting stimuli, calming yourself down when you get upset, adjusting to unexpected change, and handling frustration without an outburst. It is a set of skills that enables people to direct their own behavior towards a goal, despite the unpredictability of the world and our own feelings.

Co-regulation: The way a person adjusts their emotions and behavior through interaction with another person, in order to maintain or regain a regulated state. When adults provide warm and responsive interactions, they support, coach, and model emotional self-regulation.

Social-emotional learning (SEL): The process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.



8 SUPPORT SERVICES



“One of our high school students went from someone not advocating for themselves and feeling ‘lost’ to a student who is speaking up and helping others. It is so cool to see them get the help they need. It took one adult to help them see their potential. That adult was the Project AWARE coordinator.” – Alaska principal

SUMMARY

Support services – such as school nurses, counselors, and special education teachers – help students and families address academic, behavioral, and mental health challenges that may be barriers to student success. Support services are an important part of a trauma-engaged system, but Alaska schools often struggle with shortages of support services.

In Our Schools: Tom’s Story

Tom is walking to lunch in the cafeteria when a classmate bumps into him in a crowded hallway. The students’ 8th grade science teacher, Ms. Clark, hears them yell at one another and steps into the hall just as Tom punches the other student. Ms. Clark and another staff member step in to break up the fight. This is the third fight Tom has been in this school year.

COMMON PRACTICE

Ms. Clark reprimands the boys, and escorts Tom to the principal’s office. Tom is suspended for nine days, as he is a “repeat offender,” and told he will be expelled if he has another offense. The other student is given a three-day suspension.

TRANSFORMATIVE PRACTICE

Ms. Clark and her colleague separate the students and bring each to a quiet classroom to calm down before taking the students to the principal’s office. Both students are given in-school suspension. During their suspensions, they keep up with school work and receive extra supports. The school counselor meets with Tom and learns that due to chaos at home, he was recently placed in the care of his grandmother. The counselor reaches out to Tom’s grandmother and other key adults in and out of school to develop a plan for Tom. The counselor encourages Tom to join an after-school program that provides social and emotional skill building embedded in fun activities, and follows up to try to make sure Tom gets the support he needs.

Key Research Findings

The need for support services in Alaska schools is great. In 2017, suicide was the leading cause of death for Alaskans ages 14–19. Alaska’s suicide rate is the highest in the nation, and almost twice the national average. Statewide in 2017, 34 to 45 percent of high school students reported feeling so sad or hopeless almost every day for two or more weeks in a row that they stopped doing some of their usual activities.¹ Alaska’s high rates of adverse childhood experiences mean our students are at risk of many health problems including addiction, depression, and poorer physical health.

Of school-age children who receive behavioral and mental health services, 70 to 80 percent receive those services at school.

Studies indicate school supports can be a good investment. A Massachusetts study of school nurses found that every dollar invested in school nursing generated \$2.20 in benefits; the benefits included direct health care costs avoided and parent and teacher productivity saved.² Studies show school counselors improve student outcomes in academic as well as social-emotional realms.³ Studies likewise indicate that school social workers are linked to improved student outcomes.⁴

Support Service Roles

What do we mean by support service, and what does each provider offer? Support service providers in schools may include nurses, counselors, and licensed social workers. Schools may also employ specialists like speech, occupational and physical therapists. For the purposes of supporting trauma-engaged work in schools, we focus on nurses, counselors, and social workers, each of whom has a slightly different role, but all work most effectively when they work as a team with other school staff, family members, and community organizations.

- ▶ **School nurses:** School nurses are certified health professionals who provide direct care for students who are sick or injured, provide care for students with chronic conditions, serve as a liaison between the school and community on health matters, and provide leadership and guidance in school or district health policy.⁵
- ▶ **School counselors:** School counselors are certified and licensed educators with a master’s degree in school counseling who support students in the areas of academic achievement, career and social-emotional development with the aim of helping students become productive, well-adjusted adults.⁶
- ▶ **School social workers:** School social workers are mental health professionals with a degree in social work who provide services related to a person’s social, emotional and life adjustment to school and/or society. School social workers are the link between the home, school and community in providing direct as well as indirect services to students, families and school personnel to promote and support students’ academic and social success.⁷

Provider Shortages

Many Alaska school districts have a shortage of support service providers. Small school sizes, remoteness, high costs and statewide provider shortages all present challenges to ensuring students can access the professional supports they need. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control 2012 data and State of Alaska 2017 data:

- 31 percent of Alaska school districts do not have school counselors;
- at least 20 percent of Alaska school children do not have a school nurse;
- another 10 percent have less than the minimum level of nationally recommended services; and
- 82 percent of Alaska secondary schools do not have a full-time registered nurse.



Compounding the challenge, many counselors and school health professionals have other responsibilities and administrative burdens that pull them away from student support.

The shortages impact other staff as well as students. When there are no mental health professionals or nurses available, students may turn to teachers and other adults in a school for help. While all adults have a role to play in building supportive relationships with students, sometimes students need a deeper level of mental health support for which teachers and staff lack training. This can increase stress on the adults in a school and lead to burnout. [See Self-Care chapter.]

Supplementing School Resources

The challenge of meeting students' mental health needs is real. Some Alaska schools are looking at models that incorporate school-based mental health services or braided systems with tribal or local health providers. In addition to helping to fill the provider shortage, partnering with local or regional providers may bring more stability and more cultural and community connectedness to student support. This is particularly applicable in places with high rates of school staff turnover.

In many communities there may be partners who can help provide services to students and families, such as:

- ▶ After-school providers
- ▶ Cultural educators
- ▶ Tribal councils
- ▶ Elders
- ▶ Office of Children's Services (Alaska Department of Health and Social Services)
- ▶ Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium
- ▶ RuralICAP
- ▶ Local and regional behavioral health services
- ▶ Village and community counselors

Students can also be a resource. Districts can train and empower students with leadership and supportive skills to help themselves and their peers. Several programs are training students to provide peer support. One, Sources of Strength, empowers youth with leadership and supportive skills to help themselves and support their peers.

A note on community context: Consider a community's perspective on counseling and mental health, and incorporate cultural tools to build resilience. Build on traditional ways of knowing and healing.

Support in Action: Tom's Story

In the scenario at the start of this chapter, Tom's repeat aggression indicates he needs help. In a trauma-engaged school, he receives the supports he needs, including help from a school counselor. The counselor provides direct support to Tom, reaches out to his family, and connects Tom to an after-school program to keep him engaged and improve his social and emotional skills. The counselor also facilitates communication among school staff to ensure all are supporting Tom consistently.

Conscious of their own social-emotional needs, the teachers and counselor involved in helping Tom also talk to each other about the strain of helping students with trauma, and share strategies for decompressing.

Building Capacity

Alaska's Project AWARE combines enhanced mental health services in alternative schools with training in three large Alaska school districts. The grant-supported project will build schools' capacity to address mental health in a more coordinated and integrated fashion; provide training for early detection and response to mental health issues; connect youth and families with mental health services; and implement effective strategies to promote behavioral health and prevent mental illness.

- 1 [Alaska Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#) (2017).
- 2 Wang, L.Y. et al, [Cost-Benefit Study of School Nursing Services](#), JAMA Pediatr. 2014;168(7):642-648.
- 3 [Empirical Research Studies Showing the Value of School Counselors](#), American School Counselor Association.
- 4 Alvarez, M. et al, [School Social Workers and Educational Outcomes](#), Children & Schools, 2013;35(4):235-243.
- 5 The [National Association of School Nurses](#) identifies seven core responsibilities of school nurses.
- 6 [The Role of the School Counselor](#), American School Counselor Association.
- 7 [School Social Work Association of America](#).

IDEAL OUTCOMES

Tom feels more supported by the adults around him, and with that support, begins to learn strategies for controlling his aggression. His behavior improves and he no longer misses school due to fighting.

Suggested Steps

1. **Assess** your school's strengths and gaps in terms of support services.
2. **Brainstorm** ways to harness strengths and address gaps – consider community partners, potential new funding sources, reallocation of existing resources, and any other ideas.
3. **Redefine school counselor job descriptions** to allocate more time for working with students and their families and less time on administrative tasks.
4. **Develop team approaches** to working with students.
5. **Build meaningful partnerships** and agreements with community providers.
6. **Build student peer-to-peer** support systems.

Reflections

- ▶ What are some effective support services in your school or district?
- ▶ What are the greatest unmet needs for student support in your school or district?
- ▶ Does your school or community have good peer-to-peer supports? What is the potential to develop these supports?
- ▶ How can existing resources be used to provide better support services to students and families?
- ▶ How does staff turnover among teachers and support services impact your school?
- ▶ What community resources – individuals or organizations – might be available to expand or improve your support service capacity?



9

CULTURAL INTEGRATION AND
COMMUNITY CO-CREATION

“Just like you can adopt children you can adopt Elders or grandparents too. Elder guidance is needed for children and families to live well.”

– Traditional Healer, Bethel

SUMMARY

Alaska communities have cultural and collective strengths that, when used respectfully, can be foundational for transforming schools. The most effective approaches to implementing trauma-engaged work in schools are developed collaboratively – or co-created – by the school, community, and families. While it is important to understand all of the cultures within your school, this chapter emphasizes Alaska’s First Peoples, and can serve as a model for integrating cultural and collective strengths into trauma-engaged work.

In Our Schools: Deepening Culture and Connection

Schools are working to transform their schools to include language, culture, ways of learning, and ways of life into content areas.

COMMON PRACTICE

A school administrator and community partners begin thinking about how to bring culture into the school and incorporate a culture week in the school setting. The school also offers a language class for students.

TRANSFORMATIVE PRACTICE

Students and the community want culture fully integrated into the school. School staff from the region work with the community to outline authentic cultural activities and teachings that align with the content and social and emotional standards. Specific culturally fluent school staff work with each teacher in the school to brainstorm how to practice, implement and reinforce these standards in all content areas.

Key Research Findings

Evidence points to cultural and community traditions as an important protective factor in buffering against the negative impacts of childhood trauma. These traditions can provide a foundation for individual and collective identity.

Connecting with culture and community builds strength. According to a study of adults with three or more adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), those who reported enjoying community experiences as a child had significantly lower rates of depression, poor health, obesity and smoking than their peers who did not enjoy community experiences in childhood.¹

Research also suggests that learning becomes more relevant when cultural knowledge and prior experiences are woven in.² Experts advise using students' existing knowledge and strengths, whether teaching math or social-emotional skills.³

Authentic relationships – which are at the heart of trauma-engaged work – stem from understanding a person's worldview, cultural background, values and customs. This context is important for fostering trust and healing. This is also important so students can be free to be who they are, and not have to “check their identity at the door” in order to be seen as a successful or model student. Students should have the ability to be themselves culturally at home, in the community, and in school.

Historical Trauma

Many communities have experienced collective and intergenerational trauma through the process of colonization. Alaska's history helps explain the cultural trauma many Alaska Natives experience. Following are a few examples of Alaska's history of institutional racism and cultural dismantling efforts:

- ▶ In the Treaty of Cession between Russia and the United States, Alaska's indigenous peoples are referred to as “uncivilized native tribes.”

- ▶ As part of the colonial effort to gain control of lands, resources, and souls by destabilizing the Native population, boarding schools were established and Native children were forcibly and systemically removed from their homes. These children were often sent hundreds – if not thousands – of miles away, to be ‘civilized.’ Many Native children were physically, spiritually, emotionally, and sexually abused by those who had taken control of their lives. Many were punished for speaking their languages. Many never returned home.
- ▶ A 1915 Act establishing guidelines for Native citizenship required the endorsement of at least five white citizens attesting to the applicant's “total abandonment of any tribal customs or relationship...” in order for a Native citizen to be deemed qualified to vote.
- ▶ In 1959, the Alaska Constitution was adopted with the explicit recognition of the pioneers and those who came after. Of 55 convention delegates, only one was Alaska Native, while Alaska Native people represented approximately one-quarter of the population.

Alaska Native peoples still experience systemic and institutional inequalities that were built upon a racially inequitable state constitution. Much of this was first experienced within the education system and disrupted place-based intergenerational teaching approaches that had developed over hundreds of years.

Why is it important to know this? Because this history and these systemic practices have lingering effects in our communities, families and students today.

SAM'S STORY

A National Public Radio piece called “The Conflicting Educations of Sam Schimmel”¹¹ explores one family’s experience of intergenerational trauma and resilience. The following excerpt describes the impact on a child forced from her home in Gambell to a boarding school:

Baby Constance was born into a culture that was rich and well-adapted to the exceptionally harsh environment. Her ancestors had passed down skills for surviving — ways of reading the ice to know when walruses, seals and whales could be caught and methods of fishing in the cold water. Families worked together; subsistence hunting does not favor the greedy. Most people spoke the Alaska Native language, St. Lawrence Island Yupik, with Russian and English words mixed in. That is the language Constance’s mother, Estelle, taught her daughter.

When Constance was in middle school, she was forced by the federal government to leave her family and to fly far away to a boarding school operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, part of the Department of the Interior.

Mt. Edgecumbe High School in Sitka, Alaska was 1,200 miles away. Classes were in English, the teachers were mostly white, and the students were forbidden to speak the languages they had grown up with.

St. Lawrence Island is more than 1,000 miles from Sitka, where many Alaska Native children, including Constance Oozevaseuk, were sent by the federal government to attend boarding school.

Nathalie Dieterle for NPR

The goal of the boarding school program was simple and destructive. A founder of the program, Army officer Richard Pratt, explained in 1892, “A great general has said that the only good Indian is a dead one. In a sense, I agree with the sentiment, but only in

this: that all the Indian there is in the race should be dead. Kill the Indian in him, and save the man.”

Constance Oozevaseuk was taught to hate a lot of things about her culture and, by proxy, about herself. The food she grew up eating, the clothes her family wore, the way they hunted and fished, the stories they told, the songs they sang and the very words they spoke were inferior, she was taught. It was traumatizing.

Constance’s daughter Rene Schimmel remembers how her mother was affected. “They told her how to dress, how to speak, how to hold herself,” says Rene. “She said there was a lot of sexual abuse, a lot of physical abuse. If you got up late or you didn’t clean how you were supposed to clean, you were beaten.”

As an adult, Constance never seemed to recover a strong sense of whom she was or whom she could aspire to be. She died in 2005, but Rene remembers noticing contradictions in her mother’s identity. When Con-

stance was away from Gambell, “she would cry to be at home,” Rene says. “But when she was at home, she’d be miserable.”



Map illustrated by Nathalie Dieterle for NPR. Used by permission.

8 Jones, J., Bethell, C.D., Linkenbach, J. & Sege, R. (2017). Health effects of ACEs mitigated by positive childhood experiences (Manuscript in progress), cited in Sege, R., et al., [Balancing Adverse Childhood Experiences with HOPE \(Health Outcomes of Positive Experience\)](#): New Insights into the Role of Positive Experience on Child and Family Development, Casey Family Programs.

9 Gay, G. (2010). [Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice](#) (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

10 Morrison, A. et al. (2008). [Operationalizing Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: A Synthesis of Classroom-Based Research. Equity & Excellence in Education](#). 41. (pp.433-452).

11 Used by permission from Hersher, R., [The Conflicting Educations of Sam Schimmel](#), National Public Radio, 13 May 2018.



Cultural Integration

As cultural destruction harms us, cultural connectedness heals, especially when integrated in deep and authentic ways. Sam Schimmel, grandson of Constance in the story, finds strength in his cultural traditions:

Sam says his cultural identity – formed during all those hours hunting and fishing with his family – is something to fall back on when things get difficult, a source of resilience.

“You’re sitting in a seal blind, you’re talking to your uncles, you’re telling stories – you’re disseminating culture, is what’s going on,” he explains. “It’s not only hunting, it’s passing down traditions, stories and ways of life that would otherwise not have a chance to be passed down.”

Many traditions – like subsistence hunting – functioned as ways of building individual and community resilience. For example, the people of Western Alaska traditionally used the Qasgiq (Men’s and Women’s Houses) to honor rites of passage, as a way of connecting, healing, and learning. This tradition is one way Alaska Native people worked to keep familial and tribal relations strong – and it contributed to individual and collective well-being.

Many Alaska families that have migrated to the United States from other countries may feel isolated from traditional kinship ties and culture. This isolation may impact their ability to build resilience as a family, community and individual.

“[W]hen Anchorage School District data showed that Pacific Islanders had a high rate of absence, parents from the community came together to offer an after-school dance program. Attendance for those young people improved.”

– Anchorage’s 90 Percent Graduation by 2020 initiative

Understanding and supporting students’ cultural traditions strengthens our students, our schools, and our communities. Working in ways that integrate content, ways of learning, and students’ cultures can ensure that students can build new knowledge sets and achieve higher-order thinking more quickly.

Community Co-Creation

To effectively integrate cultural and community traditions, community involvement is critical. Working with community partners increases opportunities for healing, learning, and positive relationships with caring adults. Many of our most notable “teachable moments” happen outside school. Aligning the work between schools and community partners can bring continuity and common language to healing. Community involvement can help bring healing to the adults who may need it, helping them end a cycle of trauma and model resilience. Partners may have staffing and resources to support higher-level intervention or services for students and families.

With the growing interest in resiliency and wellness, many community partners are already engaged in this work. Potential partners include health organizations, tribes and cultural organizations, youth-serving organizations, faith-based organizations, and businesses and local employers. Collaboration, or collective impact, processes have shared goals and result in deeper impacts for students and their families.

Moving Toward Cultural Integration: Guiding Principles

We come from diverse social and cultural groups that may experience and react to trauma differently. When we approach collaboration with openness and cultural humility we can deepen our understanding of culturally specific experiences and have the ability to respond sensitively and create a space for improved wellness.

- ▶ **Understanding Culture and Trauma** – We demonstrate knowledge of how specific social and cultural groups may experience, react to, and recover from trauma differently.
- ▶ **Humility** – We are proactive in respectfully seeking information and learning about cultures, community, and family ways of being.
- ▶ **Responsiveness** – We have and can easily access support and resources for sensitively meeting the unique social and cultural needs of others.

To better serve all students in Alaska, it is helpful to understand community protocols and elevate locally self-determined solutions for transforming schools.

Cultural Integration in Action

Following are ideas to guide and inspire deeply embedded cultural integration in schools. While many school staff may already engage in these activities, carrying out these activities in partnership with community members can deepen understanding and alignment with community values.

- ▶ **Seek genuinely knowledgeable culture bearers.** When Elders, families, local leaders and community members share cultural teachings and local knowledge, cultural integration is more authentic than when school staff alone present the information.
- ▶ **Incorporate talking circles.** Provide healing activities and grief support in schools, particularly for bereavement.
- ▶ **Use meaningful cultural practices** such as music, drumming, storytelling, art, regional scientific knowledge, etc. Focus on a positive, strengths-based approach.
- ▶ **Create opportunities** in each class and practice for students to consider their own family, culture, and community ways of life, teaching, and expectation.
- ▶ **Use multiple teaching strategies** including teaching practices that have been effective teaching strategies in your region and cultural context.
- ▶ **Give back to the community.** Build a community smoke house and garden for foods. Share food, tea, and potlucks together. Adopt an Elder and check in on them.
- ▶ **Encourage students and families** to attend cultural events such as local and statewide Elders and Youth conferences, dance festivals, culture camps etc.
- ▶ **Respect the land.** Teach students about plants and animals. Tell stories about respect for the land and food. Teach proper ways to dispose of waste. Increase students' time in nature with gardening, tree care, pest control, equipment maintenance, knots and hitches, erosion control, recycling, and with cultural camps that include activities like hunting, fishing and berry picking. Consider making school schedules compatible with the subsistence lifestyle.
- ▶ **Learn about and show respect for local knowledge.** Communities have established knowledge and ways of life over hundreds of years. This knowledge can contribute to science, language arts, social and emotional skill building, art, or integrated learning.
- ▶ **Establish district support for language programs.** Dedicate resources to language teachers and recognize their expertise. Hire more bilingual teachers. Encourage teachers to value and use Indigenous languages in school. Create announcements and newsletters in Native languages or the languages spoken in the school. Establish paths for Indigenous languages through distance learning. Begin Native languages with Headstart programs. Apply Native languages in reading, math, writing, and when making tools. Have students say the Pledge of Allegiance in their Native language. Create Native language textbooks.
- ▶ **Develop curricula** that integrate traditional values. Include culturally relevant standards and outcomes. Integrate regional history.
- ▶ **Find champions** within the community who support local culture and who feel strongly about intergenerational trauma as well as current trauma.
- ▶ **Build on what exists:** Much of this has been developed by schools, districts, or local and regional Alaska Native organizations (Rosetta Stone in Inupiaq, Alaska Native Charter School, immersion curriculum, local place maps, Native Youth Olympics etc.).
- ▶ **Hire and invest in staff from the community or steeped in the community:** Have staff from the community help to incorporate community values and content into approaches.

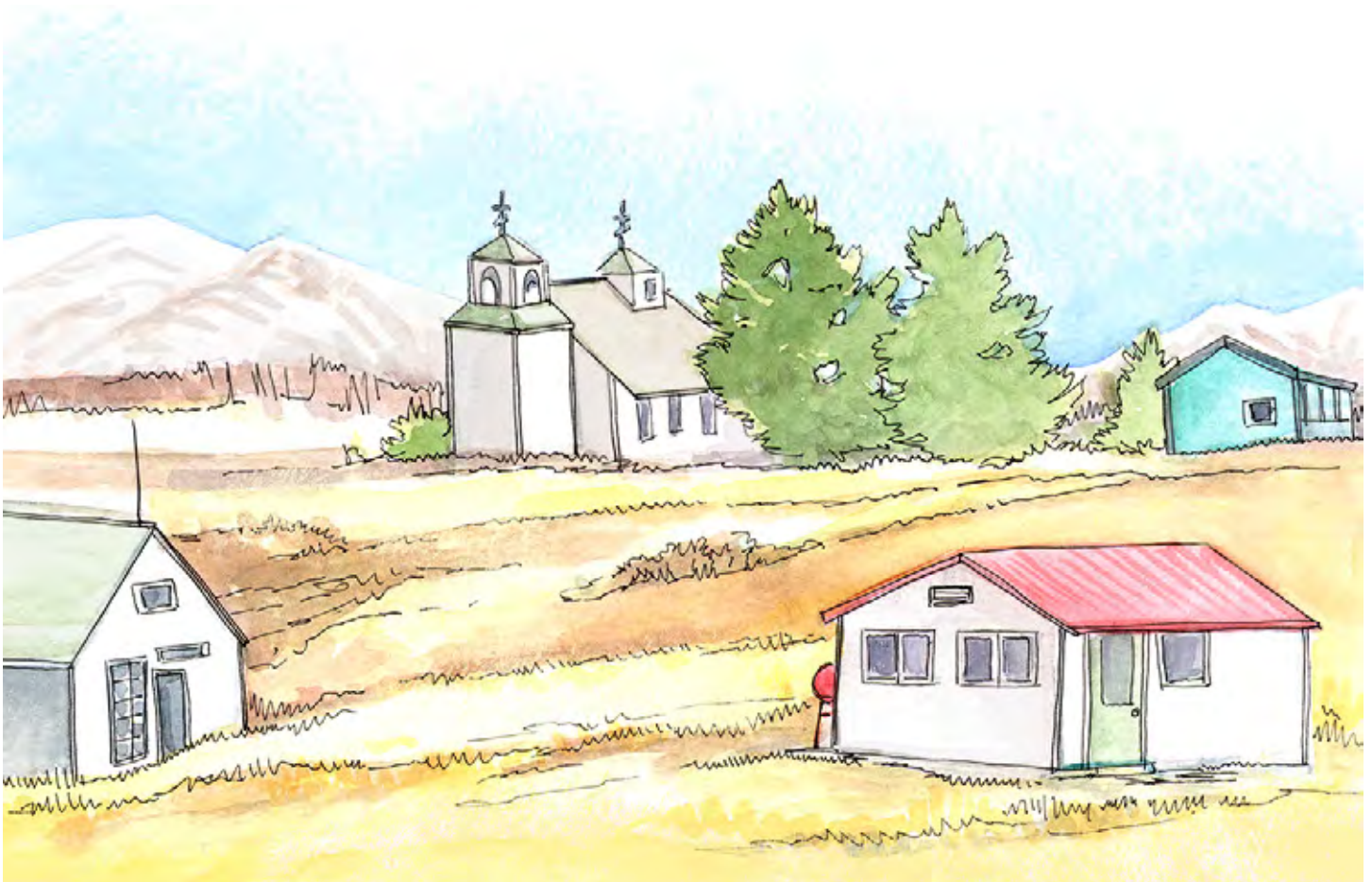
To equitably support student achievement and reduce disparities in education, we can co-create an environment of learning that restores respect for students, families and their respective cultures. By transforming our schools, we strive to advance equity for all Alaskans, so that our children and future generations experience their greatest personal and collective potential in the future.

Support in Action: Community and School Together

Now that the community and school are working together much of the language and content is familiar and students quickly understand the standard or value referenced in the class and learn through a cultural framework. This has made it easier for school staff to integrate cultural content and ways of learning into the classroom and easier for families to support students at home.

IDEAL OUTCOMES

School staff feel supported and prepared to integrate culture and community knowledge into the classroom both in terms of behavior management strategies and content. School staff work with families to reinforce messaging inside and outside of the classroom. Community members feel more comfortable to share and be a part of the school and students feel like they can bring their whole selves into the school environment.



Suggested Steps

1. **Identify the cultures, ethnicities, and languages spoken** in your school and community.
2. **Understand** your students' community history and relationship to formal education.
3. **Identify existing and potential partners** in the community for collaborative planning and co-creation.
4. **Consider establishing hiring and training** guidelines to ensure a deep understanding of cultural safety and culturally responsive teaching.
5. **Consider incorporating regionally enhanced curricula** including regionally accurate Alaska histories.
6. **Host community conversations** on racial equity, histories and healing.

Reflections

- ▶ What ideas and actions in this chapter inspire you?
- ▶ How do you integrate cultural strengths in your classroom content and practices?
- ▶ How does your school or district build on the cultural strengths of students and their families? (Modify instruction? Physical space in the room? Field trips or activities?)
- ▶ How can you integrate traditional practices into teaching, relationship building, or healing?
- ▶ What hiring and orientation practices are in place in your school to ensure that school staff are grounded in students' cultures?
- ▶ How does your school align content and teaching practices with students' cultures and family experiences?
- ▶ How do you use curricula and materials that incorporate local knowledge and content?
- ▶ Who are key partners and culture bearers to engage in this work?
- ▶ How does a trauma-engaged approach support broader community goals and values?

Key Terms

Historical trauma (also called intergenerational trauma): the cumulative emotional and psychological wounding across generations, including the lifespan, which emanates from massive group trauma. To move forward, this history and its impacts must be understood.

10 FAMILY PARTNERSHIP



“As I learned more, I realized that I could truly partner with parents and that together we could identify and attend to each student’s needs more quickly and more consistently.” –Alaska educator

SUMMARY

As a child’s first and most significant teachers, families are essential partners in helping students navigate school and heal from trauma. There is overwhelming evidence that meaningful school-family partnerships improve student achievement and school effectiveness.

In Our Schools: Anna’s Family

Anna’s father tries to attend teacher conferences. He attends some school sports events but does not spend much time in the schools. Since the beginning of the year, Anna has seemed withdrawn in class and from her peers. When Anna’s teacher, Ms. Jackson, asks her father what is going on with Anna, Anna’s father does not have much to say. When he goes home, he tells Anna she needs to participate more in the classroom.

COMMON PRACTICE

Ms. Jackson will continue to work with Anna and talk to Anna’s father at conferences.

TRANSFORMATIVE PRACTICE

Ms. Jackson uses a variety of methods to get know families. She invites families to her classroom to share their traditions. She invites families to family fun activities, and hosts teas where students share their class work. She attends community events and works to build relationships with families and learn the customs of the community. Ms. Jackson follows up with the family to provide consistent support at home and at school to Anna.

Ms. Jackson talks to school staff from the community and learns that Anna’s aunt helps care for Anna and has a significant role in family decisions.

Key Research Findings

Family involvement in a child's education is strongly correlated with improved student learning, attendance and behavior. A 2017 research literature review found the following strategies to be most related to student achievement:

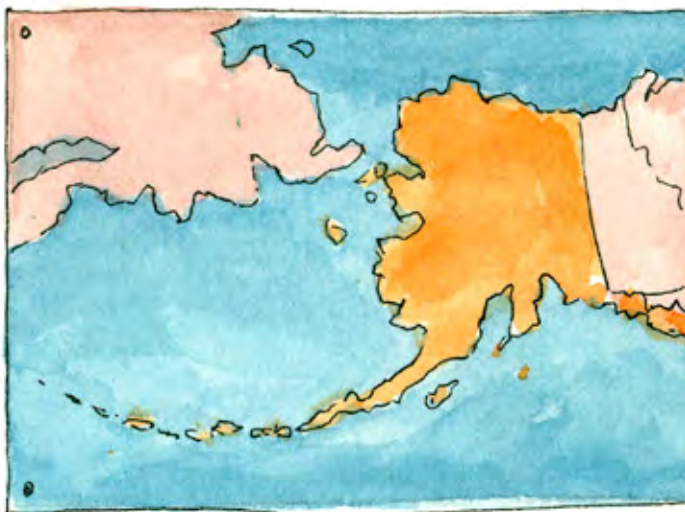
- ▶ Engaging parents (or caregivers) in their children's learning through social networks,
- ▶ Empowering parents with leadership roles in the school environment,
- ▶ Providing parents with classes to help with their own education or their child's education and
- ▶ Providing families with opportunities to engage with their children's education at home and at school.

Schools that build strong family-school relationships were found to have a positive impact on students' academic outcomes and well-being.

Some common characteristics include parents with high educational goals and aspirations for their children, and children who perceive that their parents support their education.¹

Evidence from Alaska echoes these findings. According to the 2017 Alaska School Climate and Connectedness Survey, the more respondents felt that their parents and community were involved, the better grades they earned. Likewise, the less likely they were to miss school without permission.²

The U.S. Department of Education emphasizes the importance of building trust to help families and schools build relationships, improve their own skills, and authentically partner to help students succeed.³ This is especially important in communities that have experienced trauma within educational systems.



“No meaningful family engagement can be established until relationships of trust and respect are established between home and school. A focus on relationship building is especially important in circumstances where there has been a history of mistrust between families and school., or where negative past experiences or feelings of intimidation hamper the building of partnerships.”

-U.S. Dept. of Education

Building Trusting Relationships with Families

Schools often find themselves in a position to help educate and support parents. Some parents ask, “What can I do for my child at home?” The Association of Alaska School Boards Initiative for Community Engagement has adapted national models on family engagement for Alaska.

The “C’s” of Strengthening Family Partnerships

- ▶ **Connection:** Building trust, investing time, and fostering real relationships between families, within families, and nurturing relationships with families and school staff.
- ▶ **Confidence:** Building skills for families and school staff to support students and each other and co-create together.
- ▶ **Content:** Linking the family partnership to learning and leading in school.
- ▶ **Culture:** Embedding the school environment, programs and services in the range of community values and knowledge represented by your families.
- ▶ **Co-regulation:** How adults help students to manage emotions, attention, and behaviors.

Children who have not had extensive practice with self-regulation or have had experiences that overload self-regulatory processes have an added need for co-regulation. Families can be taught to provide co-regulation across the developmental stages.

Adults also co-regulate with friends, families, colleagues, and others when we experience emotions or work through difficult challenges. We may talk to a spouse or friend about a stressful situation. Students of all ages continue to need adults and peers to help navigate stress and trauma, and to build a solid foundation for social and emotional skills.

Family Partnership: Guiding Principles

There are many principles to consider. Below are a few compiled from Alaska educators, families, and national research.

Approach families with humility and respect. A foundation of genuine respect is essential to any successful relationship between a child's school and family. Families usually know their own child best. Listen and learn.

Resist assumptions. Families come in every size and shape. Some students' primary caregivers may be grandparents, foster parents, step-parents, an older sibling or other relative. Students may live in multigenerational family units. Whatever the configuration, reach out to the caring adults in a student's life.

Seek understanding. Seek to understand a family's cultural traditions, expectations of their children, and their own past experiences with the education system. Meet families where they are.

Establish strong communication. Establish systems for two-way communication outside of the traditional family-teacher meeting.

Understand family structures. Extended family members can play a key role in education and discipline. Learn more about your families and get permissions to contact key family members.

Celebrate culture. Incorporate culture into each aspect of family outreach.

Consistent and continuous: Relationship building takes time and consistent opportunities to build trust and common understanding. While many times this can be informal it can also be helpful to create expected times and opportunities for relationship building.

Family Partnership Approaches

Following are some ways districts and schools can build and strengthen partnerships with families. Effective practices are continuous and build long-term relationships.

- ▶ Offer professional learning for families, school staff, and community members to learn side-by-side. Learning and thinking through adverse childhood experiences together can be a healthy way to learn on an even playing field.
- ▶ Outline roles in district or site-based plans for families and communities within each component of a trauma-engaged school.
- ▶ Share information in culturally appropriate ways about childhood trauma and resilience.
- ▶ Open school doors after hours for family events, such as game night or a harvest fair where families and teachers eat a meal together. These events can make schools a more welcoming place for all and break down barriers between students, families, and school staff.
- ▶ Invite families to assemblies and school events.
- ▶ Have families "adopt" a new teacher to foster connection and cultural exchange.
- ▶ Create a network of mentor parents to help new families learning about the school.
- ▶ Provide opportunities for parents to join committees that set school policies, goals, or evaluation of programs.
- ▶ Provide training to help families understand and prepare for transitions into elementary, middle, and high school.
- ▶ Provide ongoing training for teachers, administrators, and parents on family engagement.
- ▶ Have parents or community organizations take the lead on school activities.

The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development's Family Engagement Action Plan⁴ provides additional suggestions for effective school-family partnerships at different levels including district, school and classroom level. A revised edition is under development.

1 Wood, L., and Bauman, E. (2017). [How Family, School and Community Engagement Can Improve Student Achievement and Influence School Reform: Literature Review](#), American Institutes for Research for Nellie Mae Education Foundation.

2 Coulehan, H. (2017) [Transforming Family Engagement Into Thriving Family-School Partnerships](#), Association of Alaska School Boards, blogpost.

3 [Partners in Education: A Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships](#), SEDL/U.S Dept. of Education, 2013.

4 [Family Engagement Action Plan](#), Alaska Dept. of Education & Early Development, Dec 2010.

Family Partnership in Action: Anna's Story

In the scenario at the start of this chapter, teacher Ms. Jackson tries to help Anna, a student who seems withdrawn. In a transformative school, the teacher's effort to work with Anna's family goes beyond parent-teacher conferences. Ms. Jackson learns that Anna's aunt helps care for Anna and has a significant role in family decisions."

Ms. Jackson speaks with Anna's father to get permission to include Anna's aunt in meetings and conversations. With the family, Ms. Jackson learns more about skills that help Anna ground herself and self-regulate. Anna's aunt shares that the family helps Anna at home to talk and relax while beading. Ms. Jackson shares some tools that are helpful for other students and asks Anna's family for help to figure out which tools to share with Anna.

IDEAL OUTCOMES

The school and family are starting to work as a team to support Anna. As Anna's family and teacher help her gain skills for coping with her stress, Anna begins to relax and engage more at school with her peers and her schoolwork.

Suggested Steps

Like all the work in this framework, some of these steps could be undertaken by a school staff member, but for deeper and more lasting benefit, it is best if school or district leadership is involved and the work is approached as a team effort.

1. Assess current school-family relationships.

School staff, administrators, and community can review family surveys, school climate surveys, and host dialogues, and review existing relationships with families.

2. Brainstorm ways to strengthen relationships in various areas: connection, confidence, cultural safety, content, or co-regulation.

3. Make a plan that includes a vision for ideal school-family partnerships, and specific activities and strategies for getting there.

4. Create opportunities for families to share their knowledge and build confidence as the first and most important teacher.

5. Find regular and creative ways to link families to key content.

6. Include the role of family partnership in professional learning so staff learn principles and strategies for deepening their relationships with families.

Reflections

- ▶ How do staff at your school learn about families' backgrounds, experiences, and history with education?
- ▶ How do families get to know teachers and the school community? Are there opportunities for school staff and community to dialog openly?
- ▶ What ongoing partnerships already exist with families? What are some strengths in this area?
- ▶ How does your district promote family partnership and collaborative learning?
- ▶ How can schools help families provide co-regulation and resilience for their children?
- ▶ How can families supplement and reinforce key learning outside school?
- ▶ How can the community create and reinforce clear expectations for family involvement in their children's learning?

11 SELF-CARE



“Secure your own oxygen mask before assisting others.”

—Aviation safety wisdom

SUMMARY

Tending to one’s own emotional health is a critical aspect of trauma-engaged practice. Self-care practices can help adults avoid secondary trauma and burnout, and provide support and positive role modeling for students.

In Our Schools: Sabrina’s Story

Sabrina has been teaching high school for four years. She feels increasingly burdened by her students’ stresses. One student confided to her about a sexual assault when she was younger. Another student is sleeping on different couches and appears to be falling into drug use.

COMMON PRACTICE

Sabrina feels helpless and alone. Some days she feels overwhelmed by her students’ challenges and some nights she can’t sleep. She wonders if she should quit teaching and go into a less emotionally draining field.

TRANSFORMATIVE PRACTICE

Sabrina’s school prioritizes self-care and supportive relationships among staff. Sabrina has been trained to recognize signs of unhealthy stress and burnout, and realizes she needs to

address her own emotional needs. She reaches out to several friends on staff, and they help her make a plan. Her plan includes walking with a friend three days a week after school, finding one fun thing to do each weekend, and turning off her electronics by 9:30 p.m. every night. She also reaches out to her principal, who listens attentively and pairs Sabrina with a veteran teacher for support and mentoring.

Key Research Findings

Working with students who experience toxic stress can be draining. Educators and school staff who work with traumatized children and adolescents are vulnerable to the effects of trauma—referred to as compassion fatigue or secondary traumatic stress. These effects can include feeling physically, mentally, or emotionally worn out, or feeling overwhelmed by students’ traumas. Active self-care reduces teacher turnover and depression, anxiety, anger and fatigue among teachers.¹

¹ Figley, C. R. (1995). *Compassion fatigue: Coping with secondary traumatic stress disorder in those who treat the traumatized*. New York: Brunner/Mazel, Inc.

Self-Care and Secondary Trauma Reduction

It is critical for adults who work with children who experience trauma to support their own well-being. It's easy for compassionate school staff to become overly involved and engaged – to over-identify – with a student who experiences trauma. For some school staff, this can mean they are unable to stop thinking about the situation; and for others, this can result in irritability or detachment. Paying attention to the balance between healthy empathy and over-identification is essential for one's well-being. Self-care and self-awareness are critical to that balance.²

Tips for Educators

Be aware of signs of compassion fatigue. These signs include:

- ▶ Increased irritability or impatience with students,
- ▶ Difficulty planning classroom activities and lessons,
- ▶ Decreased concentration,
- ▶ Denying that traumatic events impact students,
- ▶ Feeling numb or detached,
- ▶ Intense feelings and intrusive thoughts that don't lessen over time about a student's trauma,
- ▶ Dreams about students' traumas, and
- ▶ Personal involvement with a student outside the school setting.

"If I had one wish for every school in the country, it would be that they made time for teachers to really sit down and talk about how they're feeling in the work. It doesn't serve anybody to pretend that we're teacher-bots with no emotions, which I think sometimes teachers feel like they have to be."

-Alaska educator

Don't go it alone. Guard against isolation. While respecting the confidentiality of your students, get support by:

- ▶ Working in teams,
- ▶ Talking to others in your school, and
- ▶ Asking for support from administrators or colleagues.

Recognize compassion fatigue as an occupational hazard. When an educator approaches students with an open heart and a listening ear, it can be hard not to be affected by students' traumas.

- ▶ Don't judge yourself for having strong reactions to a student's trauma.
- ▶ Compassion fatigue is a sign to seek more support and care for oneself.
- ▶ Establish the boundaries you need to ensure your own well-being.

Attend to self-care. Find healthy outlets for navigating stressful experiences. These include exercise, friendships, outdoor activities, and cultural and creative activities. These activities along with mindful practices can help us to create space from both work and stress.

Other self-care tips:

- ▶ Eat well and exercise,
- ▶ Write in a journal and reflect,
- ▶ Use progressive relaxation techniques,
- ▶ Increase Vitamin D to guard against Seasonal Affective Disorder (through supplements, Vitamin-D rich foods, or "happy lights"),
- ▶ Take a break during the workday,
- ▶ Allow yourself to cry,
- ▶ Find things to laugh about, and
- ▶ Visit an Elder for advice on how to care for yourself in the local area or ideas for nutrition healthy fun activities in the community.

Educators can avoid compassion fatigue, in part, by letting go of that which we can't control:

Know what is yours to do. Separate what you wish you could do from what you know you can do. You may feel that you are not doing enough—a sure way of developing stress and feeling overwhelmed. While you may not be able to prevent trauma or remove suffering children from their situations, you can do your job to the best of your ability, with love and compassion for both the students and yourself. Focus on the task at hand and be fully present for your students. You might begin the day by setting an intention such as, *“Today my intention is to do my part in fostering a safe environment for my students...”* And once your intention is set...

“You cannot pour from an empty cup, you must fill your cup first.”

Let go of the result. This is not to say that you stop caring about the efficacy of your teaching, connecting with students, or community building, it is to say that you can practice being less attached to exactly how you think things should look. When we loosen the grip on our ideas about the way things should be, we are much more open to new ideas and new ways of looking at things. Acknowledge the brain's desire for control with humor and compassion, and you create more space to find creative solutions.³

Self-Care in Action: Sabrina's Story

In the scenario at the start of this chapter, Sabrina feels overwhelmed and unsure if she should continue teaching. In a trauma-engaged school, adults are trained and supported in recognizing and addressing their own emotional needs. Here's what happens:

- ▶ Sabrina recognizes signs of emotional exhaustion and compassion fatigue;
- ▶ She feels safe confiding in her colleagues;
- ▶ Her colleagues respond supportively and compassionately;
- ▶ Sabrina reaches out to her principal, who responds without judgment and with concrete ideas for support; and
- ▶ Sabrina makes a plan with specific actions and accountability (meeting a friend to walk, scheduling check-ins with a mentor colleague).

IDEAL OUTCOMES

Sabrina feels less isolated and better able to cope with the traumas her students carry with them. She focuses on the things she can impact, such as her classroom culture. She models self-care with her students, instituting strategies like mindfulness breaks for herself and the class. She builds relationships with students and colleagues. Teaching becomes more rewarding for Sabrina, and her students benefit from her positive role modeling and energetic teaching.

- 2 Rodenbush, K. (2015). [The effects of trauma on behavior in the classroom](#). [Presentation materials].
- 3 [Six Ways for Educators to Avoid Compassion Fatigue](#), Lesley University.



Suggested Steps

1. **Prioritize self-care** in professional learning and the school and community culture.
2. **Foster open and supportive peer relationships** among school staff.
3. **Train all staff** to recognize signs of compassion fatigue or secondary trauma, and to understand that self-care is necessary to be able to support students' learning and students' well-being.
4. **Encourage self-care** among staff and community members who support students with trauma.
5. **Build staff peer-to-peer** support systems.

Reflections

- ▶ How do staff members in your school care for themselves and each other?
- ▶ Have you experienced compassion fatigue or secondary stress? How have you managed it?
- ▶ How does your school or community support adults who work with students who experience trauma?
- ▶ What resources and assets does your community have to offer for recharging? (e.g., wild or other places, people, events, stories, recreation, etc.)

Key Terms

Secondary traumatic stress: The emotional duress that results when an individual hears about the firsthand trauma experiences of another. Its symptoms mimic those of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Individuals affected by secondary stress may find themselves re-experiencing personal trauma.

Compassion fatigue: The physical and mental exhaustion and emotional withdrawal sometimes experienced by those who care for sick or traumatized people over an extended period of time.





APPENDICES

Appendix A: References

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Appendix B: Suggested Steps, all chapters

Introduction

1. Develop a clear rationale and vision. Consider why this work matters, what your school and community stand to gain through more thoughtful, trauma-engaged practice, and develop a vision for transforming your school, district, and community.
2. Assess your community's readiness. Districts need to assess their capacity to move toward more trauma-engaged practices. Identify or develop the necessary infrastructure and supports at the administrative level. Districts also need to determine where they want to start – district, school, classroom, community.
3. Gain buy-in and trust through communication, collaboration, and commitment to success. This work will not succeed and endure without broad participation and support from teachers, administrators, families and community members.
4. Promote a culture of safety and respect for this work. Childhood trauma, intergenerational trauma, and implicit bias can be difficult to approach. Establish and maintain clear standards for respectful listening and dialog.
5. Develop a common understanding of terms to establish and maintain respectful, constructive and open dialog while using this tool. For example, the term "historic trauma," used in this document, may be called "untold histories" elsewhere.
6. Expect setbacks. There will be mistakes and challenges in this work. View them as opportunities to learn. This work requires ongoing commitment and perseverance, resilience and reflection – the same skills children need to grow and change.
7. Use this framework as a resource. You do not need to work through the chapters sequentially; feel free to pick and choose. Likewise, not every suggested step or reflection question will apply to all users. Take what works, and adapt it as needed.

Chapter 1: Deconstructing Trauma

1. Assess your classroom or school's current discipline policies and practices. Consider whether these practices help students repair relationships, improve self-regulation, and promote accountability. [See chapters on Policy, Skill Building, and Professional Learning for more.]
2. Identify the supports and resources available to students in school. If these resources are inadequate or underdeveloped, consider how they might be augmented. [See chapter on Support Services.]
3. Identify the supports and resources available within the community at large. Consider engaging those that may not already be involved with the schools, or strengthening communication and collaboration with those that are already engaged. [See chapter on Cultural Integration and Community Co-creation.]
4. Share this information. Change often begins with understanding. The more people understand that stress has real impacts on the brain, the more we can act with compassion and caring toward our students and each other. [See chapter on Professional Learning.]

Chapter 2: Relationships

1. Walk the talk about building relationships. Model caring and respectful relationships from the top down – among school staff, between staff and families, and between staff and students.
2. Post cultural or school values about relationships. These values should be clear, concise, and easy to understand.
3. Treat each student uniquely. There is no formula for relationship-building. Authentic listening and treating each person as a unique and valued human is what matters.

4. Provide professional learning opportunities about relationship building for staff and families.
5. Create a positive professional climate that includes working agreements about staff values, interactions, and collaboration.
6. Ensure every voice is heard. Sometimes listening is more important than speaking. Create opportunities to check in with students individually.
7. Take inventory. Use the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, School Climate & Connectedness Survey and other data to evaluate your progress.
8. Remember that relationships are at the heart of any community. The organization Trauma Transformed offers three points of reflection:
9. Compassion: We strive to act compassionately during our interactions with others through the genuine expression of concern and support.
10. Relationships: We value and work towards secure and dependable relationships characterized by mutual respect and attunement.
11. Communication: We promote dependability and create trust by communicating in ways that are clear, inclusive, and useful to others.

Chapter 3: Policy Considerations

1. Review key policies that shape the district and schools. School boards and district leadership can begin reviewing key school board policies or consider AASB's trauma-engaged policy recommendations package.
2. Reach out to staff, board members, and community members during policy development. The more people involved in policymaking, the more likely it is that new policies will be understood and successfully integrated.
3. When drafting or amending policies, use language that is clear and easy to understand. Be concise and use words that reflects local usage.

Appendix B: Suggested Steps, all chapters, continued

4. Post policies broadly to ensure broad understanding and acceptance. Post in schools and public buildings such as post offices and libraries, and online.
5. Develop a short version of key policies and post throughout schools and classrooms.
6. Have a plan to ensure success. This should include educating staff and the public on the rationale, and providing the necessary training for staff. Update other documents, administrative guidance, and school handbooks to ensure consistency.

Chapter 4: Planning and Coordination

1. Consider and recruit allies or a small team to determine how to approach this process.
2. Have informal conversations to gauge awareness and readiness for trauma-engaged policies and practices in your district or school. Include staff and families.
3. Gather and analyze data and information. If this is daunting, reach out to the Association of Alaska Schools Boards or Alaska Dept. of Education and Early Development for help gathering or analyzing data.
4. Work through the process outlined in this chapter. Customize the steps to fit your community's needs and style, following the broad principles of collaboration, intentionality, and discussion.

Chapter 5: Professional Learning

1. Assess your district and school professional learning practice. Is it connected, embedded and collaborative, or top-down, "one and done"?
2. Inventory the opportunities in the district and at school to learn about trauma-engaged practice in a sequenced way throughout the year.
3. Inventory staff beliefs and knowledge about trauma. Meet staff where they are and build on staff strengths.
4. Create a professional learning plan and timeline based on staff readiness. Connect learning to a shared vision and goals for transforming your school. Strive for learning that relates directly to each position.
5. Learn together: Create a model where the whole school, all district and school staff, can learn, share, and reflect together.

6. Collaborate with the community (families, Elders, Tribe, support services) to design community-based and culturally-responsive professional learning.
7. Invite families and community members to learn together.
8. Track and evaluate growth. Consider building in tracking and evaluation to assess progress.

Chapter 6: Schoolwide practices and climate

1. Assess the current school climate using Alaska's School Climate and Connectedness Survey and other information that may be available.
2. Review existing behavior supports and discipline policies and practices.
3. Inventory the physical space for opportunity to create safe spaces.
4. Bring together stakeholders such as families, Elders, Tribes, support services, youth, and school staff to create a shared vision and goals for improving school climate and connectedness.
5. Co-create a map for reaching these goals; engage youth in developing and implementing the plan.
6. Collaborate with the community to design school discipline practices that are consistent with traditional, cultural, or community values.

Chapter 7: Skill Instruction

1. Adopt learning standards for self-regulation and social and emotional skills.
2. Make place-based and cultural modifications to these standards in collaboration with the community.
3. Inventory current programs and approaches to teaching students self-regulation and social and emotional skills. Build on strengths and identify gaps.
4. Adopt evidence-based approaches to augment existing programs.
5. Include SEL instruction in the master schedule for all grades.
6. Design and facilitate professional learning for all staff on the standards, direct instruction approach, and ways to integrate social and emotional skill practice into academics.
7. Reinforce skill development by collaborating with after-school activity providers, coaches, youth organizations and families.

Chapter 8: Support Services

1. Assess your school's strengths and gaps in terms of support services.
2. Brainstorm ways to harness strengths and address gaps – consider community partners, potential new funding sources, reallocation of existing resources, and any other ideas.
3. Redefine school counselor job descriptions to allocate more time for working with students and their families and less time on administrative tasks.
4. Develop team approaches to working with students.
5. Build meaningful partnerships and agreements with community providers.
6. Build student peer-to-peer support systems.

Chapter 9: Cultural Integration and Community Co-creation

1. Identify the cultures, ethnicities, and languages spoken in your school and community.
2. Understand your students' community history and relationship to formal education.
3. Identify existing and potential partners in the community for collaborative planning and co-creation.
4. Consider establishing hiring and training guidelines to ensure a deep understanding of cultural safety and culturally responsive teaching.
5. Consider incorporating regionally enhanced curricula including regionally accurate Alaska histories.
6. Host community conversations on racial equity, histories and healing.

Chapter 10: Family Partnerships

1. Assess current school-family relationships. School staff, administrators, and community can review family surveys, school climate surveys, and host dialogs.
2. Review relationships with families for each classroom and schoolwide. In what ways are families engaged and with who, which staff have strong relationships with families.
3. Brainstorm ways to strengthen relationships in various areas: connection, confidence, cultural safety, content, or co-regulation.
4. Make a plan that includes a vision for ideal school-family partnerships, and specific activities and strategies for getting there.

5. Create opportunities for families to share their knowledge and build confidence as the first and most important teacher with school staff, students, and each other.
6. Find regular and creative ways to link families to key content.
7. Include the role of family partnership in professional learning so staff learn principles and strategies for deepening their relationships with families.

Chapter 11: Self Care

1. Prioritize self-care in professional learning and the school and community culture.
2. Foster open and supportive peer relationships among school staff.

3. Train all staff to recognize signs of compassion fatigue or secondary trauma, and to understand that self-care is necessary to be able to support students' learning and students' well-being.
4. Encourage self-care among staff and community members who support students with trauma.
5. Build staff peer-to-peer support systems.

Appendix C: Reflections, all chapters

Introduction

- ▶ What does childhood trauma look like in your community? How does it impact your schools?
- ▶ Why is this work needed in your community?
- ▶ What is your community's vision for transforming schools? What will success look like?
- ▶ Who can your schools partner with to help reach the broader community?
- ▶ Who needs to be on board for this to work?
- ▶ What is needed to be ready to successfully undertake this work?

Chapter 1: Deconstructing Trauma

- ▶ How does the science of stress and brain development described in this chapter shed light on what you see in your schools?
- ▶ How do the policies and practices in your classroom or school help students improve self-regulation, repair relationships, and promote accountability? Could they be improved?
- ▶ What is the current level of understanding of trauma among families, school staff, and administrators in your school or community?
- ▶ What strengths in your community could be tapped to support students and staff with high levels of trauma?
- ▶ What additional information about trauma and its impact on the brain would be helpful?
- ▶ In the scenario described in this chapter, what more could be done for Sarah?

Chapter 2: Relationships

- ▶ How do you build relationships with students who may be experiencing trauma? What results have you seen?
- ▶ What strategies have you tried that have not worked?

- ▶ How can you make time for relationship-building without exhausting yourself? Are there ways to build in time to check in with vulnerable students?
- ▶ How do you decide when to ask a personal question and when to give a student space?
- ▶ What do relationships between staff look like in your school?
- ▶ What do student relationships look like in your school?
- ▶ What are discipline norms in your school and how do they impact relationship building?
- ▶ What does the School Climate and Connectedness Survey or the Youth Risk Behavior Survey tell you about relationships within your school?
- ▶ How would students and families describe their experience with staff in your school?
- ▶ What does the community value in a relationship?
- ▶ What does staff do to repair relationships that have been harmed?
- ▶ What could your staff do to infuse restorative practices in your school?

Chapter 3: Policy Consideration

- ▶ How do your policies shape school climate and disciplinary approaches?
- ▶ How do community members help shape and learn about policies and administrative regulations in your district?
- ▶ What policy or regulation changes could shape trauma-engaged practices at the state, district, or school level?
- ▶ How does your school district review and make changes to policies?
- ▶ How informed is your school board about trauma and trauma-engaged policies?
- ▶ What policies exist to support whole-school social and emotional learning, restorative discipline practices, and students experiencing trauma?

- ▶ In what ways do your district's policies support community partnerships?
- ▶ What measures are in place to break down silos?
- ▶ How do schools, tribes, students, and families work together for the best outcomes for students?

Chapter 4: Planning and Coordination of Schoolwide Efforts

- ▶ What opportunities have school staff and administrators had to develop a common understanding of trauma and their own role in transforming schools?
- ▶ What support do you need for this process to succeed?
- ▶ Was data used in this process? If so, how? If not, what data might be helpful?
- ▶ How can local and regional partners participate in planning processes? Who has been included and not included in the past? What kind of planning tool or supports would help school staff, community members, and student leaders undertake this work?
- ▶ Is there someone within the district or outside who has experience and tools to facilitate this process?
- ▶ How can your team compile information in a way that will be useful to communicate to others?

Chapter 5: Professional Learning

- ▶ How do you as a district or as a school staff learn, plan and reflect together to improve student learning?
- ▶ How can your school community move toward a shared belief that together you can positively impact student outcomes?
- ▶ What is the current state of staff knowledge, beliefs, and skills with respect to trauma-engaged practice?
- ▶ What kind of professional learning would be helpful to you with respect to transforming trauma?

Appendix C: Reflections, all chapters, continued

- ▶ How does your school or district collaborate with the community (families, Elders, Tribe, support services) to deliver culturally-responsive professional learning?
- ▶ How can your school model a community-wide approach and learn together with families and community?

Chapter 6: Schoolwide Practices and Climate

- ▶ What activities does your school do to build intentional school climates?
- ▶ Who else could be involved in school climate-building activities?
- ▶ How do students, staff and families perceive your school climate?
- ▶ How can your school embed restorative practices?
- ▶ How does your school or district use youth as leaders to build a positive school climate?
- ▶ How does your classroom's or school's physical space promote a sense of emotional and physical safety?
- ▶ How does your school or district collaborate with the community (families, Elders, Tribe, support services, volunteers) to create a positive school climate?
- ▶ How do district policies support schoolwide climate-building practices?

Chapter 7: Skill Instruction

- ▶ What social emotional skills (traditional or community values, employability skills, etc) are important to your community?
- ▶ How do you partner with the community to integrate these skills throughout the school day?
- ▶ How does your school or district teach self-regulation and social-emotional skills?
- ▶ What approaches could help strengthen these skills in students?
- ▶ How are these skills reinforced in academics and throughout the school day?

- ▶ What are staff beliefs about their role in teaching self-regulation and social-emotional skills?
- ▶ How can adults in the school community develop the skills to co-regulate with students and model SEL skills?
- ▶ How does your district or school partner with out-of-school activity providers (afterschool, sports, etc.) to reinforce SEL skill development?
- ▶ What ideas in this chapter make the most sense for your community?

Chapter 8: Support Services

- ▶ What are some effective support services in your school or district?
- ▶ What are the greatest unmet needs for student support in your school or district?
- ▶ Does your school or community have good peer-to-peer supports? What is the potential to develop these supports?
- ▶ How can existing resources be used to provide better support services to students and families?
- ▶ How does staff turnover among teachers and support services impact your school?
- ▶ What community resources – individuals or organizations – might be available to expand or improve your support service capacity?

Chapter 9: Cultural Integration and Community Co-Creation

- ▶ What ideas and actions in this chapter inspire you?
- ▶ How do you integrate cultural strengths?
- ▶ How does your school or district build on the cultural strengths of students and their families? (Modify instruction? Physical space in the room? Field trips or activities?)
- ▶ How can you integrate traditional practices into teaching, relationship building, or healing?
- ▶ What hiring and orientation practices are in place in your school to ensure that school staff are grounded in students' cultures?

- ▶ How does your school align content and teaching practices with students' cultures and family experiences?
- ▶ How do you use curricula and materials that incorporate local knowledge and content?
- ▶ Who are key partners and culture bearers to engage in this work?
- ▶ How does a trauma-engaged approach support broader community goals and values?

Chapter 10: Family Partnerships

- ▶ How do staff at your school learn about families' backgrounds, experiences, and history with education?
- ▶ How do families get to know teachers and the school community? Are there opportunities for school staff and community to dialog openly?
- ▶ What ongoing partnerships already exist with families? What are some strengths in this area?
- ▶ How does your district promote family partnership and collaborative learning?
- ▶ How can schools help families provide co-regulation and resilience for their children?
- ▶ How can families supplement and reinforce key learning outside school?
- ▶ How can the community create and reinforce clear expectations for family involvement in their children's learning?

Chapter 11: Self-Care

- ▶ How do staff members in your school care for themselves and each other?
- ▶ Have you experienced compassion fatigue or secondary stress? How have you managed it?
- ▶ How does your school or community support adults who work with students who experience trauma?
- ▶ What resources and assets does your community have to offer for recharging? (e.g., wild or other places, people, events, stories, recreation, etc.)

Appendix D: Key Terms

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs):

ACEs refer to various negative experiences in childhood including medical and natural disasters experienced by children and youth. The original ACE list included 10 categories of childhood stressors.

Abuse: emotional, physical, sexual abuse

Trauma in household environment:

substance abuse, parental separation and/or divorce, mentally ill or suicidal household member, witnessing violence, imprisoned household member

Neglect: abandonment, child's basic physical and/or emotional needs unmet

Child well-being: A state of being with others that arises when a child's needs are met, and the child has the freedom and ability to meaningfully pursue their goals and ways of life in a supportive, equitable setting now and into the future.

Childhood trauma: A negative event or series of events that surpasses the child's ordinary coping skills. It comes in many forms and includes experiences such as maltreatment, witnessing violence, or the loss of a loved one. Traumatic experiences can impact brain development and behavior inside and outside the classroom.

Co-regulation: The way a person adjusts their emotions and behavior through interaction with another person, in order to maintain or regain a regulated state. When adults provide warm and responsive interactions, they support, coach, and model emotional self-regulation.

Collective efficacy: A belief that, through collective actions, a group of people can influence student outcomes and increase achievement.

Compassion fatigue: The physical and mental exhaustion and emotional withdrawal sometimes experienced by those who care for sick or traumatized people over an extended period of time.

Emotional self-regulation: The ability to manage one's emotions and behavior. It includes not overreacting to upsetting stimuli, calming yourself down when you get upset, adjusting to unexpected change, and handling frustration without an outburst. It is a set of skills that enables people to direct their own behavior towards a goal, despite the unpredictability of the world and our own feelings.

Policy: a set of rules or principles that guide a government, business or organization.

Professional learning: Effective professional learning refers to structured professional development that results in changes in teacher practices and improvements in student learning outcomes.

School climate: the quality and character of school life; every school has a climate, and everyone in the school contributes to it.

Schoolwide practices: routines, structures, and strategies that are agreed upon and used across the school throughout the school day.

Secondary traumatic stress: The emotional distress that results when an individual hears about the firsthand trauma experiences of another. Its symptoms mimic those of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Individuals affected by secondary stress may find themselves re-experiencing personal trauma.

Social-emotional learning (SEL): The process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

Stress: Stress is the physical, mental and emotional human response to a particular stimulus, or stressor. Stress is the adaption or coping-response that helps the body prepare for challenging situations. Stress can be either negative or positive, depending on the context.

Stressor: An experience or event that signals a potentially dangerous situation.



For more information: DEED-transformingschools@alaska.gov or transformingschools@aab.org

Alaskans Prioritize Investment in Education

Who We Are

We are a coalition of advocates for education.

In partnership, the Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA), the Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB), and the Coalition for Education Equity of Alaska (CEE) administered a public opinion poll (through Zogby Analytics*) to better understand Alaska voter perspectives on pre-K, K-12 public education issues.

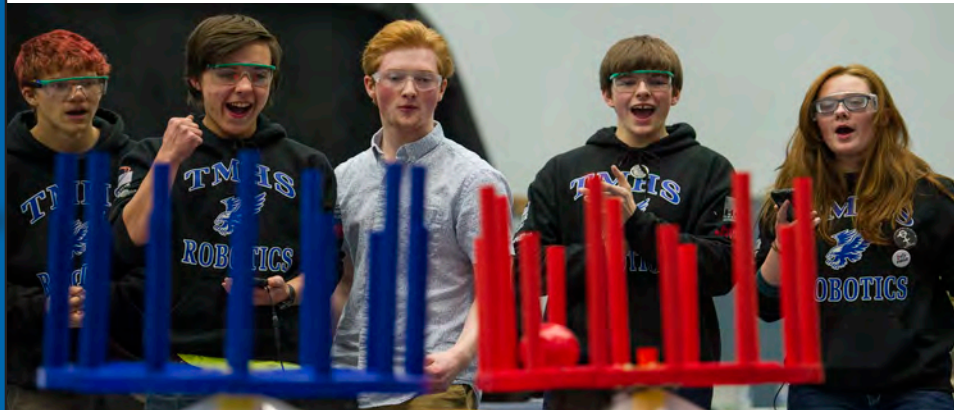
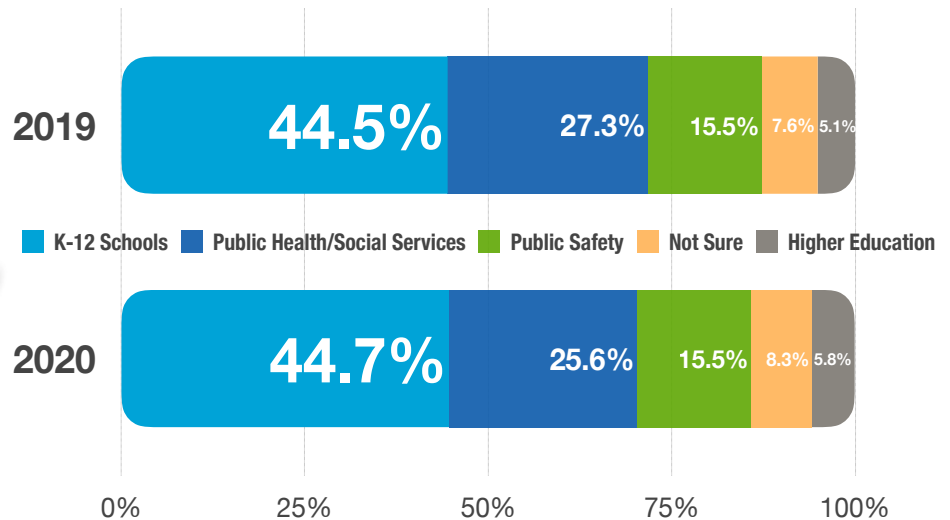
In this second annual poll, results show continued strong support for K-12 and pre-K public education in Alaska.

Our organizations are committed to priorities that will move education forward and ensure that every student in Alaska receives a quality public education every day, no matter what it takes.

Alaska's education community has made progress despite economic challenges. We continue to work together, building collective efforts that ensure we fulfill both the State's constitutional responsibility for public education and our vision for all Alaska's children.

* Zogby Analytics is a highly respected, international polling and research company using industry-standard methodologies with a margin of error of +/-4.5%

Alaskans believe public education should be the highest priority for government spending



72%

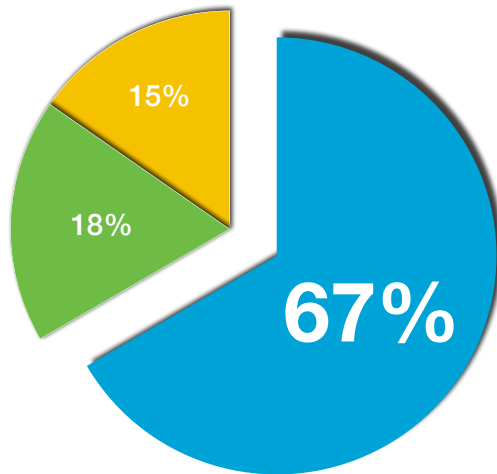
Alaskans overwhelmingly support state funded public pre-school



Alaskans support elected officials who:

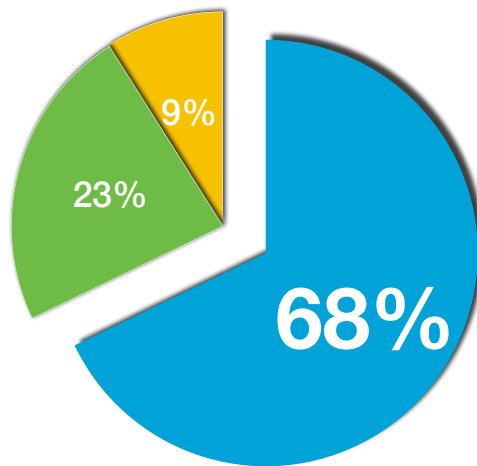
▪ Support increased funding for public schools

- Support increased funding
- Support decreased funding
- Not Sure

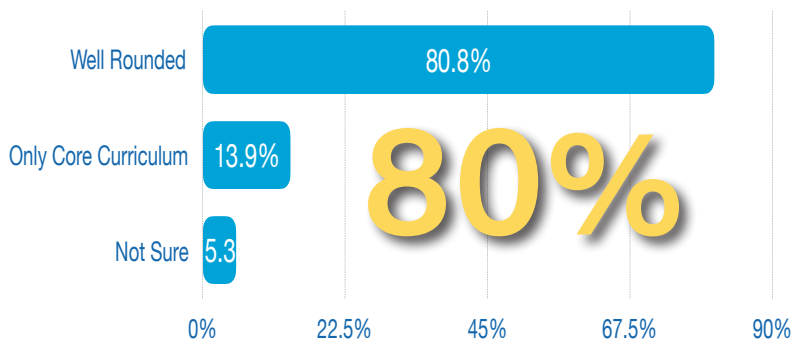


▪ Support innovation in public schools

- Supports improvements and innovation in education
- Supports providing public funding of private school alternatives
- Not sure



Alaskans believe our public schools should provide a well-rounded education



Our Vision

We work collaboratively with state policymakers and our community members toward these shared priorities:

Priority Funding

A long-term fiscal plan that ensures sustainable education funding.

Early Childhood Education

Equitable access to fully funded, high-quality pre-school for all Alaska.

Safety and Mental Health

Safe and secure schools, safety and well-being of students and increased access to mental health services.

Preparing, Attracting, Retaining Qualified Educators

A comprehensive statewide plan, programs to prepare, attract, and retain quality educators.

Career/Technical Education

Expansion of Career and Technical Education opportunities critical to high academic standards, economic growth and stability.

School Facilities

Reliable investment in school construction and major maintenance so all Alaskan children have safe facilities in which to learn.

Broadband

Sufficient, reliable broadband to provide equitable access to diversified curriculum, online resources, and global opportunities.

The Great Work of Alaska's Public Schools



Volume 2 | March 2020

What Alaskans Believe about Public Education

Published on behalf of the following education advocacy groups

CEE
Coalition for
Education Equity
of Alaska

ACSA
Alaska Council
of
School Administrators

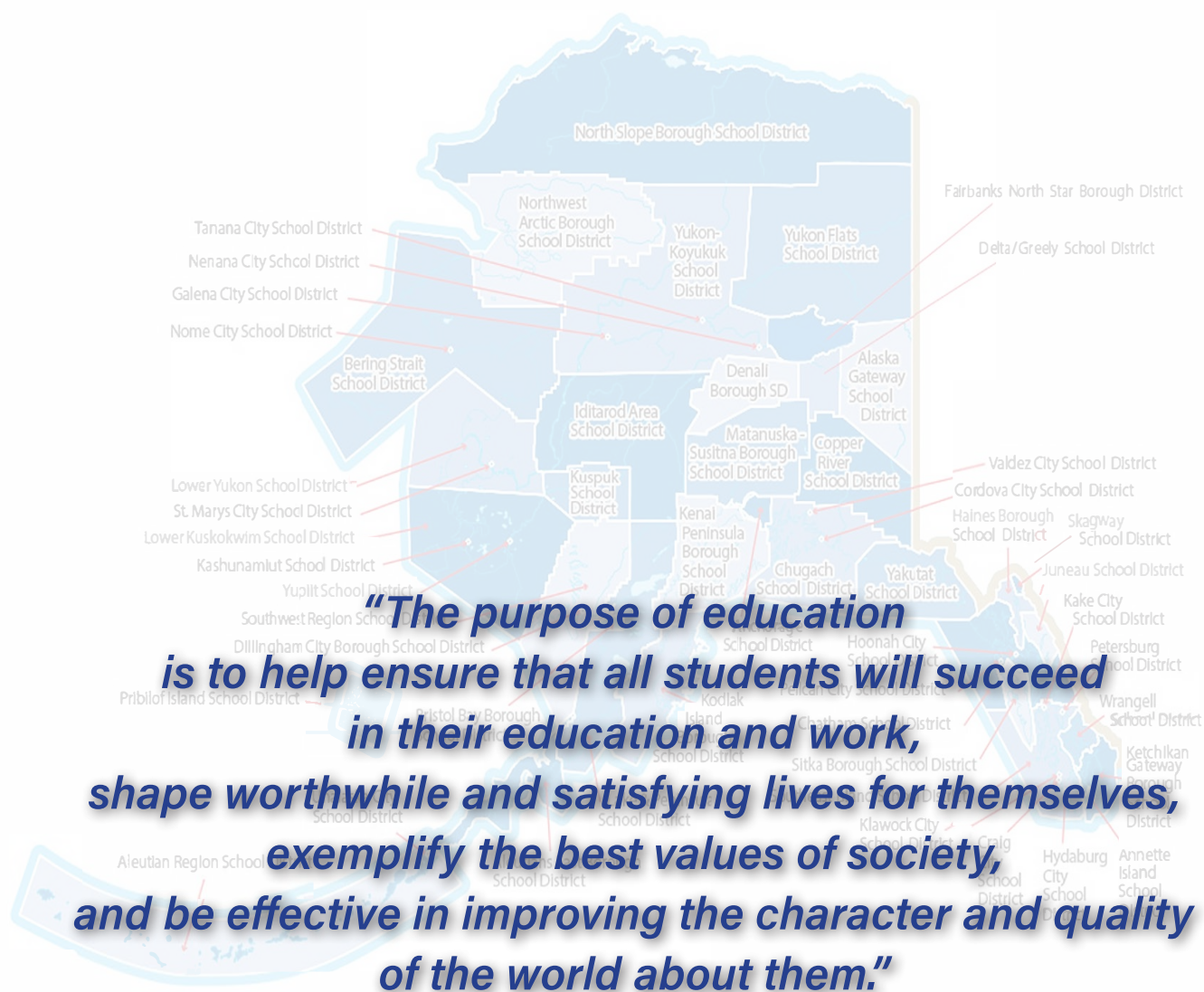
AASB
Association of
Alaska
School Boards

AASSP
Alaska Association of
Secondary School
Principals

AAESP
Alaska Association of
Elementary School
Principals

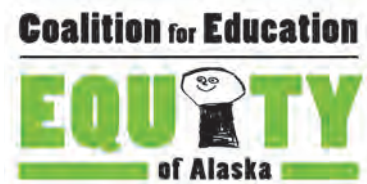
ALASBO
Association of
School Business
Administrators

ASA
Association
Superintendents
Association



- State Education Policy - AS 14.03.015

Photo credits: Juneau Economic Development Council (front, top inside) Robert DeBerry/Anchorage School District (bottom inside)



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ALASKA STAFF DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

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ALASKA STAFF DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

Alaska Staff Development Network's **mission** is to improve student outcomes by providing researched-based, quality professional development for Alaska's teachers and school administrators.

ASDN is a statewide leader in professional learning. Our priorities are established by Alaska's school districts and professional organizations. ASDN is a non-profit **statewide partnership** initiated in 1983 that includes Alaska's school districts, colleges and universities, the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, NEA-Alaska, and a number of professional education associations. ASDN is administered by the Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA) and we have close ties to the Alaska Superintendents Association and the Secondary and Elementary Principals Associations.

We believe that the unique professional growth needs of Alaska's teachers and administrators can be best met by strengthening **collaborative relationships** among these groups. We make every effort to partner and share resources in order to keep our offerings affordable. Key leaders from all districts and past program participants are surveyed annually to help set our professional learning priorities. Look for linkages in our professional learning offerings for more sustained learning from our national teacher-educators. Please contact us with suggestions for professional development that you would like to see offered in Alaska.

- Our **online courses** and **face-to-face institutes** expand the professional learning opportunities available to all educators, especially those in rural districts. Our courses meet Alaska Department of Education and Early Development requirements for **teacher certification** and **recertification** and have been approved in the Anchorage School District's MLP system.

- ASDN also **forms partnerships and develops grant proposals** that bring significant additional resources to school districts and professional associations in the state. ASDN is leading statewide professional learning partnerships around **computer science** with **Code.org**, and online learning with the Alaska Professional Learning Network (**AkPLN**).

ASDN Level 1 Member Districts: Benefits for Educators

ASDN is a membership organization. Although we welcome participation from any educator in the state, we do request that school districts (not individuals) become ASDN members. Check our website at asdn.org to see if your district is a Level 1 or 2 member. We offer the following benefits for all staff from Level 1 districts:

- \$50 discount per registrant on all ASDN online courses, including the required Alaska Studies and Multicultural Education courses
- \$50 discount per registrant for the multicultural and Alaska Studies courses with Father Michael Oleksa
- \$100 discount on webinar series.
- \$200 discount per registrant for the 2020 Alaska RTI/MTSS Effective Instruction Conference and the Alaska School Leadership Institute

NEW!



Ready for some good news? Learn about the great things happening in schools across Alaska on the "Our Alaskan Schools" blog. Go to asdn.org and check out the blog. What you are most proud of in your school? Let's tell that story!

Contact Sam Jordan sjordan@alaskaacsa.org to submit your story to the Our Alaskan Schools blog today.

ALASKA STUDIES AND MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

These courses meet the State of Alaska requirements for new teacher certification.

Alaska Alive! Online

Dates Online - Self-paced, start anytime

Credit APU EDUC 59500, 3 Credits (Level 1/Level 2) \$450/\$500

Course Description Alaska Alive! is an online course specifically designed for educators. Alaska Alive! is a survey course, built to give you an overview of the incredible history of Alaska. The themes of Education, Land and People provide a simple framework for learning activities. This course provides many materials and resources for Alaskan exploration and discovery, on foot, online and in your community. This course has been developed to meet the intent of the Legislature in terms of content so that it fulfills the Alaska History course requirement for teacher certification. Beyond certification, the course offers an abundance of information, resources and application of ideas to standards based instruction.

Instructor Sharon Bandle

"This course is perfect for the first timer, new to Alaska...it was fun and I would not change a thing!"

Creating Culturally Responsive Schools

Dates Online - Self-paced, start anytime

Credit APU EDUC 59600, 3 Credits (Level 1/Level 2) \$450/\$500

Course Description Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools were developed by Alaska Native educators throughout the state. This important work examines how educators, curriculum, schools, and communities must work together to address the unique learning needs of Alaska's diverse students. A holistic approach to learning and quality education that honors Alaska's past, present and future is critical for both rural and urban students. The goal of this online course is to introduce you to the Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools which guide you through a process of introspection and investigation of key questions: How effectively do I teach my students? How might I improve my classroom or school to increase student engagement?

Instructors Doug Penn and Laurie Van Huis

"This was a very useful course that had an immediate effect on my teaching...Very good information and practical tips for working in rural schools."

Communicating Across Cultures with Father Oleksa



Dates Anchorage: January 30, 31, Feb. 1
Online work complete by March 6

Credit APU EDUC 59200, 3 credits (Level 1/Level 2) \$450/\$500

Course Description What's a culture? What's your culture? Do you have a culture? Everyone does. The best definition of culture is "the way you see the world." But you can't SEE the way you see the world. Your own culture is always invisible to you. We can look at other people's cultures, but we can't articulate our own very well. The Rev. Dr. Michael Oleksa's presentations are devoted to a discussion of cultures and how they affect us as educators. This course is the product of many years of experience in rural communities as well as years of research. It is especially designed to give the participant grounding in the cultural differences that often create miscommunication among Alaskans. The class begins with three face-to-face sessions with Father Oleksa in Anchorage (two evenings and all day Saturday) and is completed online with instructor Sharon Bandle.

"One of the best introductions to the cultural standards I could imagine. It would really help all teachers refocus on the moments when communication may not be clear as it should be... Thanks!!"

Alaska Alive! with Father Oleksa

Dates Anchorage: May 28, 29, 30
Online work complete by July 17

Credit APU EDUC 59500, 3 credits (Level 1/Level 2) \$450/\$500

Course Description In Alaska Alive! you will learn about Alaska's history and the history of education in the state from one of Alaska's most dynamic presenters. Explore the culture of the Native peoples of Alaska and the connections between the environment and emigrations. The class begins with three face-to-face sessions with Father Oleksa in Anchorage November 7, 9 and 10 (two evening sessions and all day Saturday) and is completed online with instructor Sharon Bandle.

"Father Oleksa is a true national treasure and is full of cultural knowledge."

WEBINAR SERIES

Combating Learned Helplessness in the Math Classroom

New Webinar Series with Bobbi Jo Erb

Dates March 5, 11, 18 and April 1

All webinars are from 3:45-5:45 p.m.

Tuition No cost for educators from Level 1 organizations and districts, \$175 for all others.



MaCSA
MAINE COUNCIL OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS



Credit One university credit is available for attending all webinars and participating in online assignments and discussions. There is an additional tuition fee of \$125 for the credit. Credit registration takes place after the first webinar.

Target Audience K-12 Math Educators

Description Have you ever worked with students who refuse to try-- even when a task is relatively easy? Or students who give up before they have started? Or students who cannot make a move without your help every step of the way? As educators, we have seen this type of student behavior far too often.

Psychologists refer to this behavior as “learned helplessness.” In this webinar series, we will look at what learned helplessness is and ways to combat it. Our examples and resources will be in the area of mathematics, but the strategies discussed will work in any classroom setting.

Webinar #1:

What the Research Says about Learned Helplessness

What is “learned helplessness,” and how does it impact student learning and performance? We will learn some of the research on how learned helplessness develops and how it affects executive functioning skills.

Webinar #2:

Strategies to Support Initiation and Accurate Thinking

What are some strategies to combat learned helplessness in the math classroom? We will discuss strategies for helping students who struggle with initiation and accurate thinking when working on a task.

Webinar #3: Resources to Increase Independence

How can we help students with help-seeking in the math classroom? We will discuss strategies and resources for assisting students to become more independent learners who can get themselves “unstuck” when they encounter a challenge.

Webinar #4:

How to Create A Classroom Culture of Collective Efficacy

What role can classroom collective efficacy play in combating learned helplessness? We will discuss strategies for building a culture of collective efficacy within the math classroom.

Presenter

Bobbi Jo Erb is a self-proclaimed “Math Geek”. Currently, she works as a math consultant with districts in Alaska and Idaho on best practices in mathematics instruction. She has served as an ASDN math consultant as well. Formerly, she was the Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction and the STEM: Math Curriculum Coordinator for the Anchorage School District. Ms. Erb has 20 years of classroom teaching experience ranging from middle and high school to the university level.



Webinar for School Leaders

Why Equity Matters

With Tyrone C. Howard, Ph.D.

March 24. 4:00-5:00 p.m. **No cost to ASDN/ACSA members.**

Today's schools strive for equity, access, and excellence. Using data on current student demographics, our session will address strategies, approaches and resources that school personnel can implement to aid learners, with a focus on the most vulnerable students. The session will address complex challenges that students encounter in their efforts to be successful and how they can be supported socially, emotionally and academically by practitioners, school staff, and school leaders.

Tyrone C. Howard, Ph.D., is a professor in the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at UCLA and the director of the UCLA Pritzker Center for Strengthening Children and Families, a campus-wide consortium examining academic, mental health, and social emotional experiences for vulnerable youth populations. He was a popular keynote presenter at the ASA Conference last year.

WEBINAR SERIES

Building Resilience in Students Impacted by Adverse Childhood Experiences

New Webinar Series with Ricky Robertson

Dates February 11, March 3, 31 and April 14.

All webinars start at 3:45 p.m.

Tuition No cost for educators from Level 1 organizations and districts, \$175 for all others.



Credit One university credit is available for attending all webinars and participating in online assignments and discussions. There is an additional tuition fee of \$125 for the credit. Credit registration takes place after the first webinar.

Target Audience K-12 Educators

Description Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and trauma have been shown to negatively impact brain development, physical health, and social-emotional well-being. Without culturally responsive, trauma-sensitive systems in place, schools struggle to address the social-emotional and behavioral needs of students, often relying upon exclusionary discipline that feeds the school-to-prison pipeline. In this series of webinars, participants will: deepen their understanding of the impact of ACEs and trauma; gain tools to respectfully address cumulative and historical trauma; and be introduced to culturally responsive, trauma-informed interventions that foster connection, resilience, and success for students as well as educators.

Webinar #1:

Behavior as a Form of Communication

In this webinar, we will further explore behavior as a form of communication. Participants will deepen their understanding of relationship-based teaching and acquire skills to foster safety, trust, and belonging in their schools.

Webinar #2:

Equity & Trauma-Informed Practices

In this webinar, we will explore trauma through an equity lens. Participants will learn about historical and cumulative trauma and the ways that they impact students of marginalized communities and identities. We will explore the importance of culturally-responsive teaching that affirms all students while fostering their innate resilience.

Webinar #3:

Introduction to Restorative Practices

Trauma-informed schools respond to conflict in ways that build trust and accountability. In this webinar, participants will be introduced to the fundamental principles of restorative practices and ways to implement them in their schools.

Webinar #4:

Trauma-Informed Tier 3 Meetings

In this webinar, we will conduct a mock tier 3 meeting using a case study. Participants will learn to create trauma-informed intervention plans for students who require intensive social-emotional and behavioral supports.

Presenter

Ricky Robertson has had the privilege to work with students from pre-K to 12th grade who have persevered in the face of adverse experiences and trauma. Drawing from experience as a teacher and Behavior Intervention Specialist, Ricky coaches educators in developing a relationship-based approach to teaching and learning that inspires transformation through compassion, humor, deep listening, and “real talk.” Ricky is the co-author of *Building Resilience in Students Impacted by Adverse Childhood Experiences* and will be presenting at the 2020 RTI/MTSS Effective Instruction Conference.



WEBINAR SERIES

Evidenced-Based Strategies for Improving Early Literacy

New Webinar Series with Lexie Domaradzki and Shelby Skaanes

Dates February 13, 27 and March 19, 26.

All webinars start at 3:45 p.m.

Tuition No cost for Level 1 organizations and districts, \$175 for all others.

Credit One university credit is available for attending all webinars and participating in online assignments and discussions. There is an additional tuition fee of \$125 for the credit. Credit registration takes place after the first webinar.

Target Audience PreK-Grade 3 Teachers, Literacy Instructional Coaches, K-5 Special Education Teachers.

Description What does effective Early Foundational Skills instruction look like with Alaskan students? This session will focus on what a daily, 30-minute foundational skills lesson should include for K-2 students. We will model effective early literacy routines, share videos from Alaskan classrooms and provide opportunities to practice the Foundational Skills routines with colleagues.

This webinar series is designed to be compatible with ALL reading programs and will help you strengthen your daily 30-minute Foundational Skill portion of your literacy instruction.

Webinar #1: Phonological Awareness

Developing Phonological Awareness provides the foundation for students' reading success in the future. Refine your ability to deliver high quality phonological awareness for both core instruction as well as intervention.

Webinar #2: Developing Automaticity with Early Phonics Skills

Refine your ability to deliver efficient, high-quality phonics instruction using evidence-based routines. We will investigate the routines and watch examples of effective phonics instruction in rural Alaskan classrooms.

Webinar #3: Developing Automaticity with Advanced Phonics

Explore how to deliver efficient, high-quality instruction with complex vowel patterns, affixes, and multisyllabic words. Our discussion will be enhanced by examining video of teachers using evidence-based routines in rural Alaskan classrooms.

Webinar #4: Developing Accurate and Fluent Readers in Connected text.

Strengthen your skills in using decodable text and dictation to support accuracy and fluency in connected text.

Presenters

Lexie Domaradzki started as an elementary school teacher more than 20 years ago and has since dedicated her professional life to high quality education for all. She provides consultation and professional development services to the Alaska, Oregon, Montana and Idaho Departments of Education, and the Alaska Staff Development Network. In addition to consulting and teaching, Lexie served as the Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning for the Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and was the Washington Reading First Director for three years.



Shelby Skaanes is passionate about providing data-driven consultation, from establishment of an assessment system, to determining the best intervention approach so that each student has access to optimal improvement. She has presented at numerous institutes and leadership conferences the past ten years. Shelby has worked as a consultant for ASDN and a number of school districts in Alaska. She has been in the education field for nearly 20 years, nine of which were as an elementary school teacher in Tacoma, Washington.



WEBINAR SERIES

Evidence-Based Practices to Enhance Student Learning New Webinar Series with David Nagel

Dates Feb 5, 19, 26 and March 12.

All webinars start at 3:45 p.m.

Tuition No cost for educators from Level 1 organizations and districts, \$175 for all others.



Credit One university credit is available for attending all webinars and participating in online assignments and discussions. There is an additional tuition fee of \$125 for the credit. Credit registration takes place after the first webinar.

Target Audience K-12 Educators

Description This interactive and engaging four-part webinar series will highlight the most current research that has the potential to drive learning to the highest levels for both students and adults. During each of the four sessions, David will guide the participants into specific and practical examples of what the research looks like when it comes to life in schools and classrooms.

Webinar #1: Examining the Critical Connection Between Collective Efficacy and Teacher Credibility

This session will establish many elements for the how and why for the rest of this four-part webinar series. Participants will be guided through a deep dive into the core actions that drive collective efficacy in their schools and districts. Collective efficacy begins with individual efficacy and examining the level of teacher credibility present in our classrooms.

Webinar #2: Digging Deeper with Teacher Clarity—Connecting Clarity to Formative Assessment and Feedback

This webinar will take the elements addressed in session one and guide participants into examining ways to increase the quantity and quality of teacher clarity in their schools and classrooms. Emphasis will be given to supporting participants in seeing how clarity is the driver for quality formative assessment and feedback decisions teachers need to make when planning for and executing instructional actions. Time for reflection and action planning will be provided.

Webinar #3: Increasing the Impact of Quality Instructional Actions—Through a Focus on Surface, Deep, and Transfer Learning

We will make connections to the previous sessions and then support participants in examining the three critical phases of learning: Surface, Deep, and Transfer. All three phases are important to consider when planning for **what** types of instructional actions as well as **when** to use them based on the level of learning that teachers are focusing on with their students. David will provide participants with a deep dive into very specific examples of instructional actions to support each level of learning they can then apply immediately.

Webinar #4: Practical Grading Actions for ALL Levels

The final session will address one of the actions that can either augment or derail the level of impact of so many other decisions that teachers make. Time will be devoted first to schoolwide grading actions that can be used as filters or guides-- all teachers can apply similar grading actions in different ways based on the level of need in their classrooms. Next, we will explore specific classroom grading actions participants can adapt for their own classroom need that will support student learning as well as drive student ownership and resilience.

Presenter

David Nagel is a former high school teacher and administrator, Dave has been a professional developer since 2003; presenting, keynoting, and coaching teachers and school administrators at all levels Pre-K-12. His primary areas of expertise are in effective collaboration (PLCs), common formative assessments, effective use of scoring guides for learning targets, and meaningful and practical grading practices. Dave is an author/consultant with Corwin and is a certified presenter in John Hattie's Visible Learning+. His book, *Effective Grading Practices for Secondary Teachers*, was recently published by Corwin Press. Dave has conducted a previous webinar series for ASDN and will speak at the 2020 RTI/MTSS Effective Instruction Conference.





Alaska's Professional Learning Network

Join a free professional online learning network for Alaska's teachers. We've partnered with the Alaska Department of Education and the Teaching Channel to offer an online space to support professional growth for educators statewide. The Alaska Professional Learning Network (AkPLN) is provided for Alaskan educators at no cost through ASDN/ACSA.

What is it? AkPLN is a private collaboration space for Alaska's teachers, schools districts and education organizations. It has a library of engaging professional learning resources for educators and learning plans that can help frame professional development at the district, school and classroom level. Contact Tammy Morris for login information: tmorris@alaskaacsa.org.

Try it! Independent evaluators surveyed teachers who used AkPLN and found that:



Overall, teachers rated their experience with AkPLN as 4.4 out of 5 stars.

"The flexibility of the AkPLN makes it useful to a wide range of Alaskan educators. Educators can get involved at a variety of levels from quick 5-minute videos to taking a course for credit, to taking a series of courses in a Learning Pathway, to forming their own group to share and discuss information with colleagues. The Alaska Professional Learning Network is a success because users at all levels experienced high quality professional development that positively impacted their work."

AkPLN at Work

- ★ Housing a series of districtwide micro-credentials for Lower Kuskokwim School District
- ★ Discussion groups for rural principals and rural assistant principals
- ★ Hosting a series of learning plans for Bering Strait School District featuring videos of exemplary instruction in BSSD
- ★ Online PLC for the Alaska School Leadership Academy blended learning cohort of early career principals.

AkPLN Math and ELA Courses *Let's get better together!*

- Registration opens January 13, 2020 • Last day to register January 27, 2020
- Courses run January 27-April 06, 2020

Learn online with the Alaska Professional Learning Network (AkPLN) and apply in your classroom tomorrow. Hone your skills and grow and refine your instructional strategies in English Language Arts, Math and Science.

- Join us for online mini-courses focused on improving specific instructional practices
- Explore best instructional practice in your classroom while collaborating with other Alaska teachers online.
- The course follows an exploration and action-oriented cycle through a variety of evidence-based best practices that are aligned to the Alaska Standards.

Tuition: Educators may participate in these short courses at no cost. One optional 500-level professional learning credit is available in connection with **each of these short courses**.

ELA

NEW!

Course #1: Literacy Instruction K-5: Theme and Reading for Inquiry

NEW!

Course #2: Literacy Instruction in the Secondary Classroom: Close Reading and Informational Text

Course #3: Vocabulary Instruction: Semantic Mapping and Developing Word Consciousness)

Math

Course #1: Building a Culture of Student Math Discourse in Middle School

Course #2: Understanding Fractions as Numbers – Adding and Subtracting Fractions

Course #3: Number Sense: Understanding Place Value and Adding and Subtracting

NEW ONLINE CLASSES

Framework and Formula for Writing Meaningful IEPs

Dates Enroll anytime January 1-July 15.
All work must be completed December 30, 2020.

Tuition (Tier 1/Tier2) \$410/\$465

Credit 3 credits

Instructor of Record Ashley Lyons

Target Audience

- Child find and evaluation team members, including speech pathologists, school psychologists, occupational therapists, mental health consultants, and teachers.
- ECSE providers and educators responsible for writing initial and ongoing IEPs for preschoolers and/or those transitioning from early intervention or to school age.
- Early elementary educators who serve children with moderate to severe disabilities from Kindergarten through fifth grade.

Have you ever struggled to write a goal for a young student that really addressed their needs instead of just meeting district policies?!?!

If yes, then this course is for you! This new online course was developed by Dr. Kristie Pretti-Frontczak. It includes four modules with 12 individual lessons. You can work at your own pace, alongside your team members, or with colleagues from across the state. Content for each lesson is delivered in brief videos, audio files, and/or transcripts.

As a result of this course, you will strengthen your overall ability to write legally defensible and meaningful IEPs, particularly for preschoolers and early elementary-aged students. You will expand your skills in writing meaningful IEPs, engaging in data-driven decision-making, and delivering specially designed instruction.

Dr. Kristie Pretti-Frontczak aims for professional learning that is transformative, forward-thinking and solution-focused. She is a {r}evolutionary speaker, researcher, and play advocate. Through podcasts, blogs, free resources, and trainings, Kristie inspires and supports early educators in their teaching. Kristie spent 16 years, as faculty, at Kent State University and now coaches early educators worldwide. Kristie has worked throughout the state of Alaska and presented at the Alaska RTI/Effective Instruction Conference. She is a Past President of the Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children.



STEM Across the Curriculum

This course is for K-12 teachers of all subjects who are curious about integrating STEM concepts into their current curriculum. Absolutely no math or science background is needed! Learn simple and engaging strategies for incorporating STEM into what you already do in the classroom.



Teaching Climate Change

This course is for K-12 teachers of all subjects who want to address climate change but are not sure where to start. Teaching climate change can be challenging, especially in the politically charged era in which we now live. Learn strategies for teaching students about climate change in an unbiased way that is hopeful and inspiring, rather than doom and gloom.



Dates Registration opens Jan 13. Last day to register Jan 27.
Course runs Jan 27 – April 20, 2020

Tuition (Level 1/Level2) \$300/\$400

Credit 3 credits

Instructor of Record Joanna Karet, PhD.

Joanna Karet has a PhD in Education, an MS in Biology and a current 6-12th grade Biology teaching license, along with 5 years of science teaching experience at the middle school level. She is currently an Assistant Professor at Colorado State University - Global Master's of Science in Teaching and Learning Online Program. She previously served as a visiting Research Professor with the University of Alaska Anchorage Center for Alaska Education Policy Research.



NEW ONLINE CLASSES

Register Anytime. Coursework due 8/15/20. You may complete earlier and your grade will be available after 5/16/20.

Credits: One and three credit courses available for 500-level university credit through UAA PACE

Tuition: 3-credits: (Level 1/Level 2) \$475/\$525



Digital Tools in the Connected Classroom

In this course, you'll explore and evaluate various digital tools available online to support student learning and the acquisition of 21st Century skills known as the 4Cs-- communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking. You'll develop lessons and a project plan that integrate the 4Cs with supportive digital tools, all while hitting core standards educators are required to cover. No matter the grade or subject you teach, you'll come away with a better understanding of the digital tools available, and plenty of applicable strategies to incorporate technology that engages, enhances and extends learning.

Teaching with Video to Support Digital Classroom Success

Bring your lessons to life with video that engages students and supports your curricular goals. Whether you're planning for your flipped or blended classroom, taking a dive into personalized learning, or just looking to add more digital content to your lessons, this course is for you. Participants will learn to filter through the myriad of online content to curate high quality, relevant videos to support classroom curriculum. We'll show you some free web tools to record video for instruction, feedback, and differentiated student support. Participants will develop lessons that include both curated and created video content that build higher-order thinking skills and help tap into students' creative brains.

Integrating Innovative Classroom Technology

Whether you're just beginning to dip your toes into the ed tech waters or ready to dive in head first, this course will give you a strong foundation in technology integration best practices to support increased engagement and academic outcomes in your diverse classroom. Throughout this course, you'll learn how to move beyond online skills practice and word processing to integrate meaningful technology into your classroom routine. We'll show you how to build lessons with the SAMR and the ISTE frameworks in mind and introduce you to simple digital tools that encourage creativity and critical thinking.

Making the Shift to Blended Learning in Your Classroom

Get ready to reinvent the student experience with Blended Learning! We'll show you how this approach offers a more personalized experience for students through increased connectivity, agency, and creativity in the classroom. Whether you're an energized educator blazing a trail towards technology integration in your classroom or a progressive school leader looking to support change across several classrooms or buildings, this course will lead you through the development of your blended learning vision. You'll gain insights into building and sustaining a blended learning culture, explore and apply digital tools including Screencastify and Hyperdocs to support learning objectives, and design learning activities (for adult or student learners) using blended learning models like Station Rotation, Flipped Classroom, Individual Rotations, and A La Carte.

Docs, Slides, and Forms in the Classroom: Your Next Level Google Guide

In this course you'll go beyond the basic features and functions of Google tools, to explore what's possible with G Suite. You'll learn how to take Slides, Sheets, and Forms to the next level with interactive, dynamic elements that incorporate 21st-century skills like collaboration, communication, and creativity. You will learn how to design a digital portfolio template to showcase student growth using the versatile Sites platform. We will also show you how to set up your Google Drive and Chrome browser for maximum efficiency and introduce you to Keep, a lesser known, but powerful Google tool to organize and track your digital workflow. Advance your skills and knowledge of G Suite with this intermediate level course.

Learning on the Move, The Kinesthetic Classroom

Motivated. Engaged. Happy. High academic achievement. These are the words and phrases that will describe your students after taking Learning on the Move! Imagine a classroom where students have a "safe place for the mind," are free to take risks, and where teamwork and communication are key. You will discover what it means to "learn from the feet up," why the brain's preferred way of learning is by doing, and what it means to be a kinesthetic educator. Explore the brain-body connection, see why the research champions movement in teaching and realize ways to prepare the brain for learning as you watch your students soar!

SELF-PACED COURSES- START ANYTIME!

Start Anytime - Work at a Pace That Makes Sense With Your Schedule

- All classes are approved by an accredited Alaskan university as graduate (500-level), professional development courses and are approved by the State of Alaska for teacher re-certification.
- All our online courses are approved in the Anchorage School District's MLP system.

Find out more and register online at asdn.org/online-learning

Advanced Classroom Management: Children as Change Agents

Credits: 2 **Tuition:** (Level 1/Level 2) \$310/\$360

Alaska Alive

Credits: 3 **Tuition:** (Level 1/Level 2) \$450/\$500

Meets the Alaska Studies Certification Requirement

Anger Management & Effective Discipline to Prevent Violence

Credits: 3 **Tuition:** (Level 1/Level 2) \$475/\$525

Attention Deficit Disorder

Credits: 2 **Tuition:** (Level 1/Level 2) \$310/\$360

Autism & Aspergers Disorders

Credits: 2 **Tuition:** (Level 1/Level 2) \$310/\$360

Becoming A Reflective Teacher

Credits: 3 **Tuition:** (Level 1/Level 2) \$475/\$525

Behavior is Language: Strategies for Managing Disruptive Behavior

Credits: 3 **Tuition:** (Level 1/Level 2) \$475/\$525

Child Abuse: Working with Abused & Neglected Children

Credits: 2 **Tuition:** (Level 1/Level 2) \$310/\$360

Creating Culturally Responsive Schools

Credits: 3

Tuition: (Level 1/Level 2) \$450/\$500 + materials

Meets the Alaska Multicultural Studies Certification Requirement

Cyberbullying Prevention

Credits: 3 **Tuition:** (Level 1/Level 2) \$475/\$525

Differentiation and the Brain

Credits: 3 **Tuition:** (Level 1/Level 2) \$475/\$525

Dropout Prevention

Credits: 3 **Tuition:** (Level 1/Level 2) \$475/\$525

Drugs & Alcohol in Schools:

Understanding Substance Use & Abuse

Credits: 2 **Tuition:** (Level 1/Level 2) \$310/\$360

Elementary Reading Intervention Strategies

Credits: 3 **Tuition:** (Level 1/Level 2) \$475/\$525

Energize Your Classroom

Credits: 3 **Tuition:** (Level 1/Level 2) \$475/\$525

NEW! English Language Learner: Language Acquisition

Credits: 3 **Tuition:** (Level 1/Level 2) \$475/\$525

NEW! English Language Learner: Methods & Materials

Credits: 3 **Tuition:** (Level 1/Level 2) \$475/\$525

Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching

Credits: 3 **Tuition:** (Level 1/Level 2) \$475/\$525

Grading: A Guide to Effective Practice

Credits: 3 **Tuition:** (Level 1/Level 2) \$475/\$525

Humor in the Classroom: To Teach and Reach Students

Credits: 2 **Tuition:** (Level 1/Level 2) \$310/\$360

Inclusion: Working with Students with Special Needs in General Education Classrooms

Credits: 2 **Tuition:** (Level 1/Level 2) \$310/\$360

Learning Disabilities: Practical Information for the Classroom Teacher

Credits: 2 **Tuition:** (Level 1/Level 2) \$310/\$360

Manage it All: Students, Curriculum and Time

Credits: 3 **Tuition:** (Level 1/Level 2) \$475/\$525

Motivating and Engaging Students

Credits: 3 **Tuition:** (Level 1/Level 2) \$475/\$525

Motivating Underachievers with RTI & DI

Credits: 3 **Tuition:** (Level 1/Level 2) \$475/\$525

Response to Intervention: Practical Information for the Classroom Teacher

Credits: 3 **Tuition:** (Level 1/Level 2) \$475/\$525

Supporting Struggling Students with Rigorous Instruction

Credits: 3 **Tuition:** (Level 1/Level 2) \$475/\$525

Talented & Gifted: Working with High Achievers

Credits: 2 **Tuition:** (Level 1/Level 2) \$310/\$360

Teaching Diversity: Influences & Issues in the Classroom

Credits: 2 **Tuition:** (Level 1/Level 2) \$310/\$360

Teaching Elementary Math Conceptually

Credits: 2 **Tuition:** (Level 1/Level 2) \$310/\$360

Teaching Reading and Comprehension to English Language Learners K-5

Credits: 3 **Tuition:** (Level 1/Level 2) \$475/\$525

Traumatized Child: Effects of Stress & Trauma on Student Learning

Credits: 2 **Tuition:** (Level 1/Level 2) \$310/\$360

Understanding Aggression

Credits: 3 **Tuition:** (Level 1/Level 2) \$475/\$525

Violence in Schools: Identification, Prevention & Intervention Strategies

Credits: 2 **Tuition:** (Level 1/Level 2) \$310/\$360

Why DI? An Introduction to Differentiated Instruction

Credits: 3 **Tuition:** (Level 1/Level 2) \$475/\$525

And More!
**See complete list
of courses online.**

SUMMER CODE.ORG WORKSHOPS for MIDDLE and HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS

APPLICATIONS OPEN - travel scholarships available!!



WHY COMPUTER SCIENCE?

Computer science helps nurture problem-solving skills, logic, collaboration and creativity. These skills will open doors in every field. Students will gain an opportunity to create technology that will solve problems in their communities and in the world.

Nationally, 67% of all new jobs in STEM are in computing -- while only 10% of STEM graduates are in Computer Science.

Currently there are over 640 open computer science positions in Alaska with an average salary of \$81,500.

WHAT IS Code.org?

Code.org is a national nonprofit that believes that every student should have the opportunity to learn computer science, just like biology, chemistry or algebra.

- Code.org is the organization behind the Hour of Code, completed by over 600 million students in 180 countries.
- Code.org has partnered with more than 180 school districts and 1.2 million teachers use their K-12 curriculum
- The Code.org curriculum is aligned with ISTE, CSTA and CC standards
- In Alaska Code.org's curriculum is used in 24% of elementary schools, 17% of middle schools and 12% of high schools.
- Thanks to generous support from the tech community, this online curriculum is -and will always be- FREE.

The Code.org Professional Learning Program is open to educators who are interested in teaching Code.org courses - no prior computer science experience required!

Program features:

- Engaging workshop experiences
- Teaching and learning in context
- One cohesive set of no-cost resources
- An active community of CS educators



WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

Middle and high school teachers must apply to Code.org to participate in the 5-day summer workshops. Workshops will be held for CS Discoveries (Grades 6-10) or CS Principles (Grades 9-12 and AP) in Anchorage, Fairbanks and Juneau in June.

There is no cost to participate in the workshops and travel scholarships

Successful applicants will:

- Commit to the full professional learning program including the 5-day summer workshop and virtual or face-to-face extension sessions over the 2020-2021 school year.
- Teach the course in the 2020-21 school year
- For CS Discoveries, teach students between 6th and 10th grade
- For CS Principles, teach students between 9th and 12th grade
- ACTIVELY support the recruitment and enrollment of a diverse group of students in the course, representative of the school's student population

THE TIME TO ACT IS NOW!

Alaska approved computer science standards last summer. The Code.org curriculum is aligned with these new CS Standards.

This year Code.org professional learning is "no cost to you" because of generous donations through Code.org donors and local

partnerships with GCI Education and Microsoft. Additionally Code.org and our new partner Alaska Airlines will provide travel support to qualified applicants. First come, first serve!

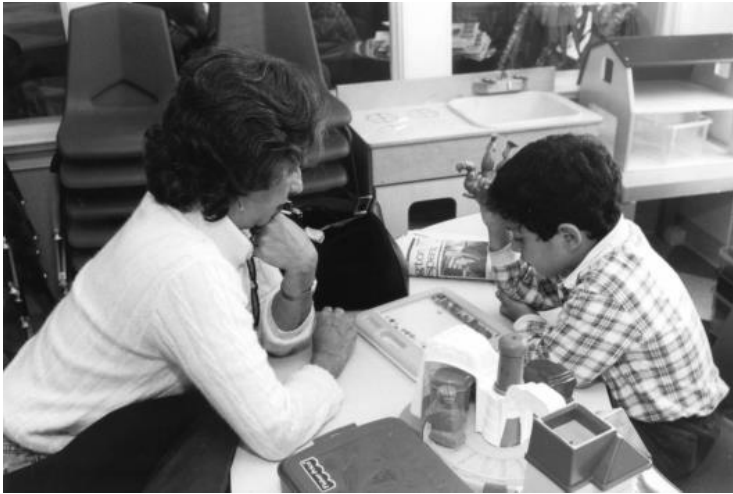
Applications for the summer workshops are open now and will close this spring. Apply early as scholarships are limited.



What is RTI and MTSS?

RTI = Response To Intervention

MTSS = Multi-Tiered Systems of Support.



When students struggle with academic achievement or behavior, schools need a method for providing systematic and data driven intervention.

The main goal of RTI and MTSS is to identify and provide intervention before students get too far behind.

If schools use data to identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes, monitor student progress, provide evidence-based interventions, adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student's responsiveness, and identify students with learning disabilities or other disabilities (according to state law), that students will be more likely to achieve success.

In RTI/MTSS systems, interventions are integrated within a multi-level, or tiered, prevention system to maximize student achievement and reduce behavior problems:

Typically, around 15 percent receive small-group and supplemental instruction in Tier 2, while the remaining 5 percent require more intensive and individualized interventions in Tier 3. In Alaska, school districts define their own use of RTI/MTSS systems. Application of the general RTI/MTSS systems will be applied based on what method best serves each district.

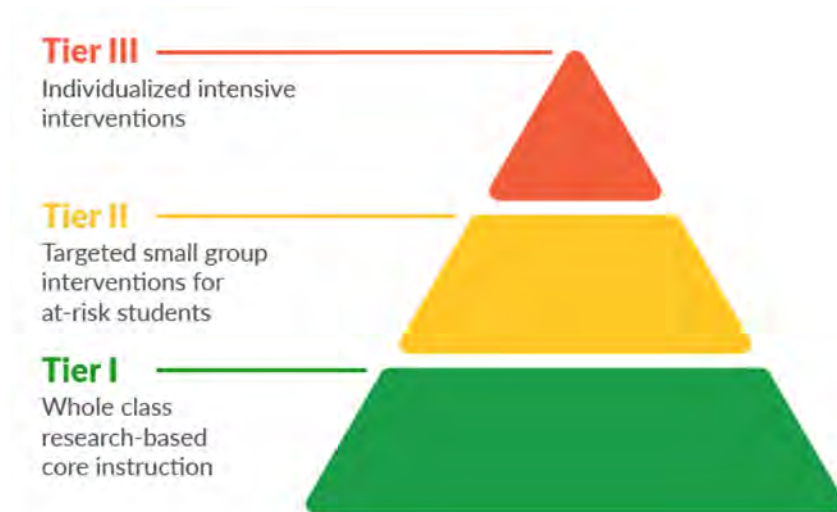
For more information:

- AK DEED: Alaska RTI Definitions: https://education.alaska.gov/esea/rti/docs/RTI_Definitions.pdf
- Anchorage Public School MTSS Information <https://www.asdk12.org/Page/5369>
- Center on Response to Intervention (RTI) <https://rti4success.org/> Prepared by the Alaska Staff Development Network (ASDN), 1/2020

In RTI/MTSS systems, interventions are integrated within a multi-level, or tiered, prevention system to maximize student achievement and reduce behavior problems:

▪ **Tier 3 - Intensive Intervention:**

Intensive intervention is designed to address severe and persistent learning or behavior difficulties. It also is used for students who have proven non-responsive to Tier 2 or secondary intervention. Intensive interventions are characterized by increased intensity (e.g., smaller group, increased time) and individualization of academic or behavioral



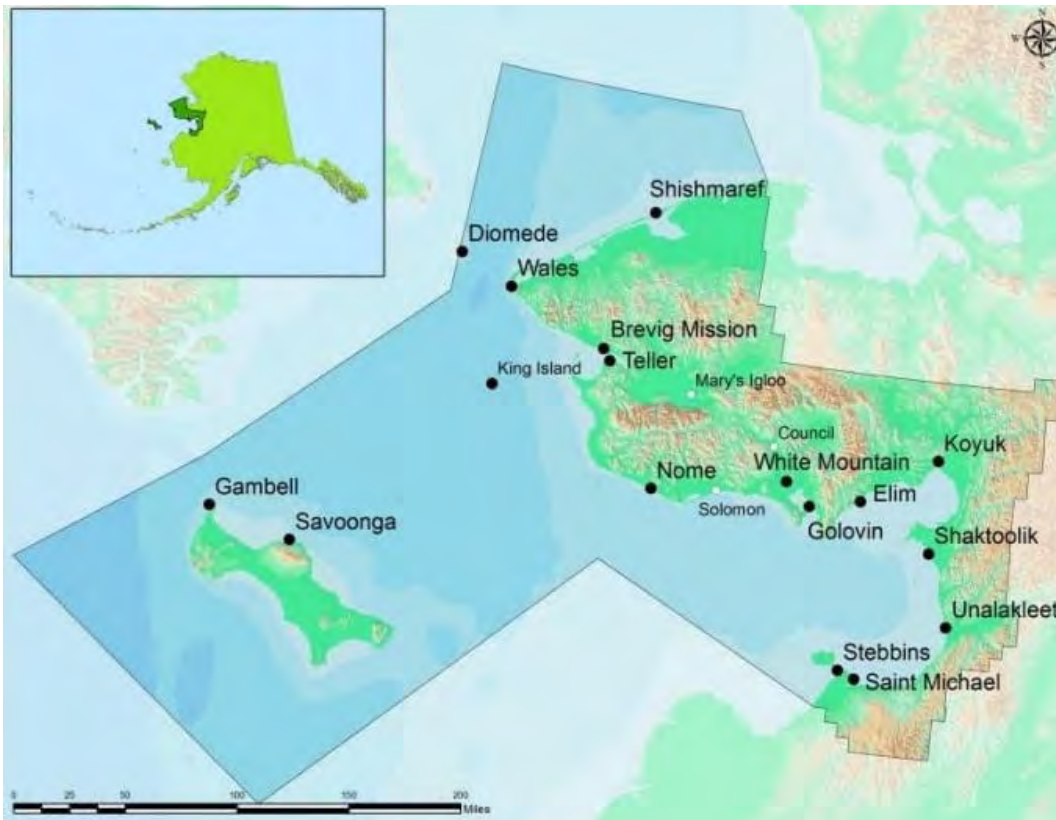
▪ **Tier 2 - Targeted Intervention:**

Tier 2 may also be called Strategic Intervention. It is the second level of intensity in a multi-level prevention system. Interventions occurring at the secondary level are evidence based and address the learning or behavioral challenges of students identified as at risk for poor learning or behavioral outcomes.

(e.g., smaller group, increased time) and individualization of academic or behavioral intervention.

▪ **Tier 1 - Primary Prevention Level:**

Tier 1 may also be called Universal Intervention, Core Curriculum or Tier 1. The primary prevention level is the first level in a multi-level prevention system. It consists of high-quality core curriculum and research-based instructional practices that meet the needs of most students.



→ 'Inspiring a Passion for STEM on the Western Edge of Alaska: The GEAR UP Program in BSSD' by Sam Jordan at ASDN

ouralaskanschools.edublogs.org

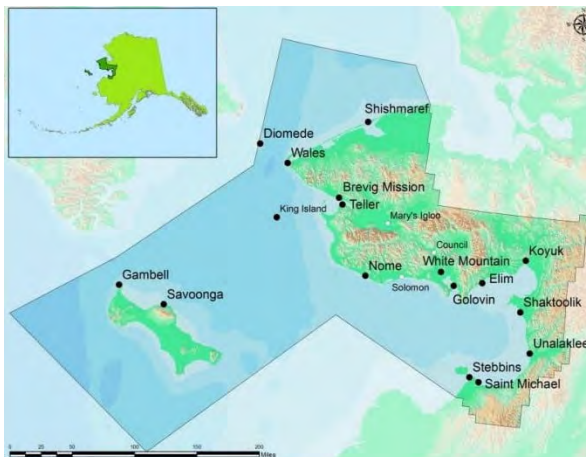
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The Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) initiative is one of the largest national programs for increasing the college and career readiness of low-income students in the U.S. Focused on middle and high school students, GEAR UP helps empower local partnerships comprised of K-12 schools, institutions of higher education, state agencies, and community organizations to achieve three strategic goals: (1) increasing the postsecondary expectations and readiness of students; (2) improving high school graduation and postsecondary enrollment rates; and (3) raising the knowledge of postsecondary options, preparation, and financing among students and families.

The Rural Alaska GEAR UP Partnership serves students in Alaska's two largest rural school districts; Bering Strait (BSSD) and Lower Kuskokwim (LKSD) in western Alaska. The partnership is supported by the [Alaska Staff Development Network](#) (ASDN). ASDN's founder Kelly Tonsmeire serves as the Rural Alaska GEAR UP Partnership Project Director.



Bering Strait School District sits on the western edge of Alaska.

The [Bering Strait School District \(BSSD\)](#) serves 15 village communities, the majority of which are only accessible by plane or, in the case

of Diomedes, by helicopter. The district is geographically one of the largest in the United States, encompassing an area of 80,000 square miles. BSSD's GEAR UP program serves a cohort of 556 students in grades 6-9 and prides itself that their program is highly responsive to the needs and ambitions of its students.

BSSD's GEAR UP program focuses on three main services:

- An after school tutoring program
- A school and district level science fair competition
- A Middle School Academy focused on STEM

“Our students are truly ingenious”, states Carolyn Heflin, BSSD's GEAR UP program lead. “They look at problems and can instantly see solutions to making things work. I think it reflects a certain pragmatism that students in Western Alaska grow up with. Our GEAR UP program tries to amplify and refine that natural talent.”



The foundation to BSSD's GEAR UP work is providing year long after school tutoring. Teachers at each school site volunteer for a tutoring role and work with groups of students after the regular school day ends. Tutoring sessions provide a safe, warm and supportive space for students to either receive extra help with assignments or dig deeper into topics that interest them.

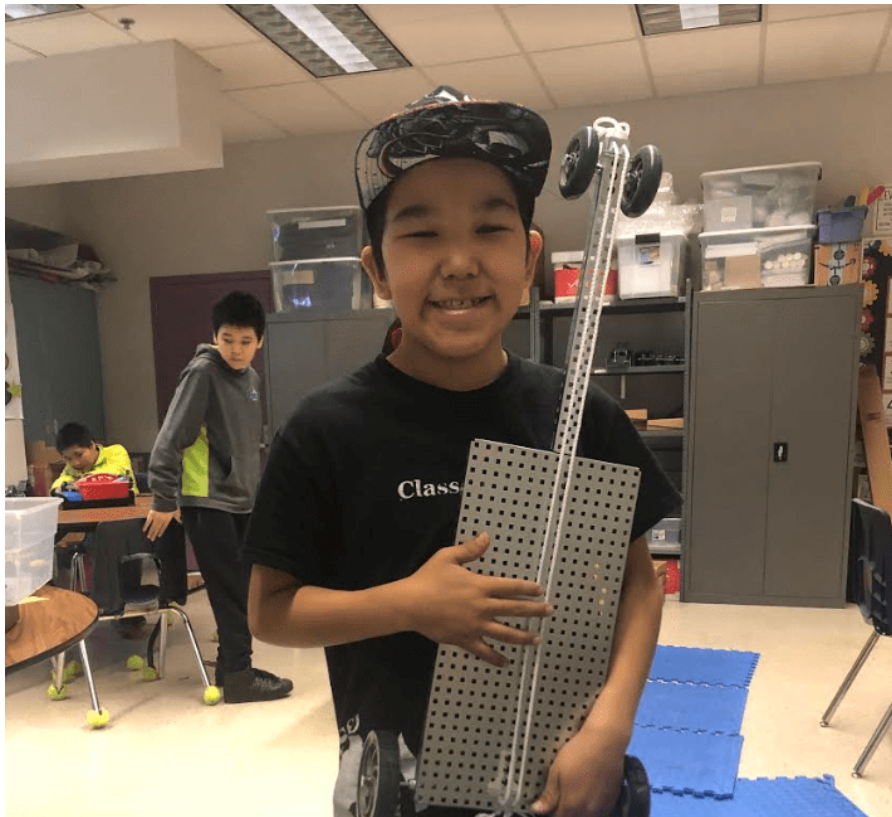
GEAR UP has also empowered BSSD to create a [district wide science fair competition](#). “We wanted to provide an opportunity beyond sports for students to interact with each other, with students from

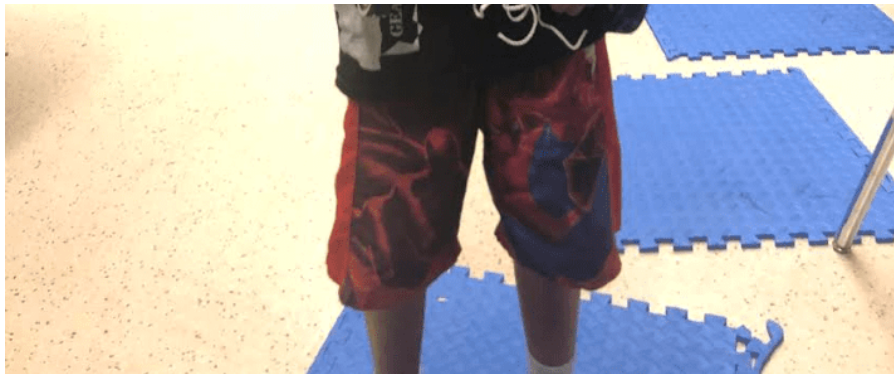
other BSSD schools and ultimately with students from around the state,” reflects Carolyn Heflin.



2019 BSSD Science Fair participants in St. Michael.

The district science fair allows students to explore areas of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), design a science fair project, practice public speaking about their project and potentially move from a schoolwide competition to a district wide competition. District winners then compete at the statewide [Alaska Science & Engineering Fair](#) event held each spring.



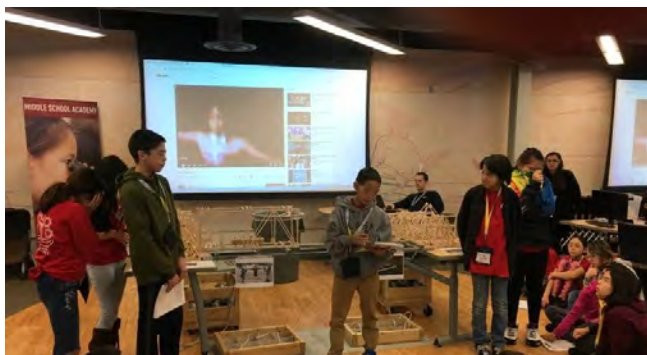


A BSSD GEAR UP student works on his robotics project.

Supporting BSSD's science fair program is their STEM curriculum. BSSD uses [Project Lead the Way \(PLTW\)](#) to provide hands on learning experiences and STEM career exploration. Their use of PLTW focuses on two main areas:

1. Design and Modeling, where students discover the design process and develop an understanding of the influence of creativity and innovation in their lives. They are then challenged and empowered to use and apply what they've learned throughout the unit to design a therapeutic toy for a child who has cerebral palsy.
2. Automation and Robotics, where students learn about the history and impact of automation and robotics as they explore mechanical systems, energy transfer, machine automation, and computer control systems.

Through the PLTW curriculum, BSSD students have been able to construct robots, create working models for common infrastructure like traffic lights and use engineering principles to design therapeutic toys for children with disabilities.

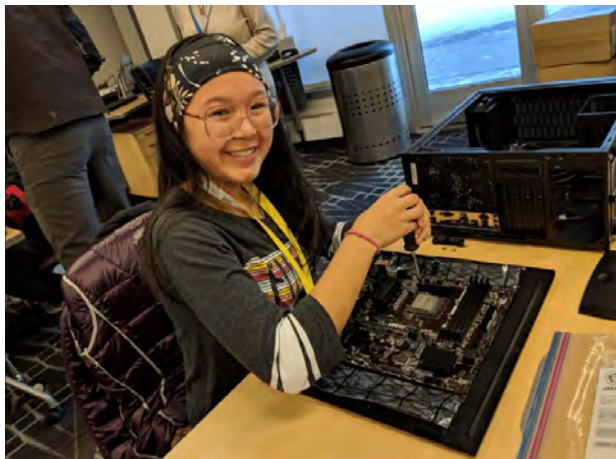




Middle School Academy participants build and present on their projects.

The final component of BSSD's GEAR UP program is the two-week Middle School Academy run at the [Alaska Native and Science Engineering Academy \(ANSEP\)](#) in Anchorage. This academy is an experience designed to promote STEM education and exploration of careers across the STEM fields.

It is both an academic and residential experience for students, many of whom who have not spent much time away from the Bering Strait region. Students engage in a variety of hands-on activities during their time at ANSEP, from building a computer to dissecting squid to testing structures on an earthquake simulation table.



A Middle School Academy participant builds a computer.

“Our overall goal in GEAR UP is to try and hook students into something they are passionate about and begin to imagine how they could translate that into a career,” states Carolyn Helfin. “And everyone has benefited! Our students love it, and our teachers relish in ‘getting their geek on’ and sharing their excitement about STEM and deep learning.”

Future plans for BSSD's GEAR UP program include the development of career focused electives at the high school level and the development

of aviation training opportunities with the [Northwestern Alaska Career and Technical Center \(NACTEC\)](#) in Nome.

To learn more about the Bering Strait School District, you can [watch this amazing film](#) about each of its fifteen unique school sites and their communities.





→ 'Preparing for College And Flying Drones: The Gear Up Program in LKSD' by Sam Jordan at ASDN

ouralaskanschools.edublogs.org

4 mins read



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LKSD is comprised of 28 schools across 22,000 square miles.

In LKSD, GEAR UP serves a cohort of 1,050 students in 23 different sites across a territory as large as the state of West Virginia. At its core, LKSD's unique program has drawn its success from establishing trust and relationships in local communities, with its eye on giving back to the life and livelihood of the region.

“When we first visited our region to explain the program, we wanted to show how college and career readiness can serve communities in the Lower Kuskokwim instead of pulling students away from rural Alaska. We listened to the goals they had; namely that students learn skills they can use to give back and build up the Lower Kuskokwim region”, says Alex Bernard, LKSD’s GEAR UP program lead.

Ultimately LKSD’s team decided on two main approaches to their GEAR UP work: transition academies and drones.



LKSD Gear Up lead Alex Bernard leads activities at a recent Transition Academy.

Transition Academies at LKSD are designed to aid students transitioning from 8th grade into high school and help them define a plan for graduation and post-school life. Alex Bernard calls it a ‘career mentality’ that allows students to define their own pathway to success and hold themselves accountable.

During the academies, students travel to their regional hub Bethel, audit a college class and tour local employers like the Bethel Fire Department, Alaska Fish and Wildlife, tribal government offices, the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation hospital facilities and fitness centers to better understand which degree (college or vocational) is required to work there. Students then meet with their school counselor to create a four-year plan for success that they will follow and fine tune over the course of their high school years.

Complementing career activities, students participate in anti-bullying and resiliency trainings from a partnership with the National Guard. Students also take part in activities from the ‘[Because I Said I Would](#)’ organization that helps students create personal change through promises made and kept. Students write out a promise to themselves or to someone else and hand it in to their program leader.

“I collect all the promise cards, and as they fulfill them, I make sure to hand deliver them back – even if I have to fly there”, reflects Alex Bernard. So far he has returned about 30 cards, while a huge stack labeled “high school graduation” waits expectantly on his desk.

So far, twelve transition academies have been held through the GEAR UP program.



Drones have many applications across the Lower Kuskokwim region, including being able to plan for infrastructure in places like Quinhagak, shown from a drone camera perspective in the lower right.

Unmanned vehicles or drones are not only an eye-catching activity but also a developing career path in Alaska and nationwide. Drones can be used across many industries, from photography and cinema to wildlife management to public safety and search and rescue. The basic controller skills required are reminiscent of video game controllers, so many students are quick to apply personal gaming experience to operating the drones.

Not only that, students at the nine drone learning sites are seeing firsthand how their skills are in demand. Recently GEAR UP students were hired by local news station KYUK to film the start of the '[Akiak Dash](#)' dogsled race and Bethel Search and Rescue reached out to the drone team to assist in searching for a missing child. The ultimate goal is to help students pass their [FAA Part 107 Drone License exam](#) and develop the drone industry in the Lower Kuskokwim region.

2020 Akiak Dash Start Video



“We just want forward momentum”, reflects Alex Bernard. “We know that stagnation leads to dropouts, so we are doing everything we can

to make this program as relevant, engaging and authentic as possible.”

LKSD’s GEAR UP program is proving to do just that. Providing classroom support with tools like the iTutor program, an online tutoring service, helps bridge the gap between out of class activities and the work of academic achievement. As students move up toward their final year, there is already a plan to provide internships and college campus visits.

“We want our GEAR UP students to plan their pathway, own it, achieve it and then live it” says Assistant Superintendent Kimberly Hankins. “LKSD is really proud of this work and we all can’t wait to see its long-term impact.”

To stay informed about all the great GEAR UP work happening in LKSD, including their growing library of drone footage, get connected via their social media sites below:



<https://www.facebook.com/LKSDGEARUP/>



<https://www.instagram.com/lksdgearup/>

