

CSHB 231: Solving Alaska's Educator Crisis Through Strategic Alignment

Presenting comprehensive, data-driven legislative solutions directly rooted in the stakeholder-designed Teacher Retention and Recruitment (TRR) Playbook



The Vision for Alaska's Classrooms

Every child deserves an excellent education, which starts with a stable, high-quality workforce. CSHB 231 aligns state goals to implement practical, professional, and policy solutions based on three guiding principles:



Stability

Building a sustainable, homegrown workforce that understands the Alaska context and reducing the disruptions that prevent children from thriving



Respect

Listening to educators, offering long-term security, and ensuring their voices actively shape future policy



Strategic Investment

Focusing on data-driven, cost-effective interventions that end the constant cycle of recruitment

The Financial Stakes of the Educator Crisis

The persistent crisis in educator recruitment and retention takes a severe financial toll on Alaskan school districts. CSHB 231 targets these exact inefficiencies

\$20,500

The Cost of Inaction:

Losing a single educator costs Alaska more than \$20,500 per teacher. This represents a massive, recurring drain on district resources dedicated to constant, inefficient recruitment cycles for vacant positions

(Source: ISER data collected in 2017)

The Fiscal Benefit of Retention:

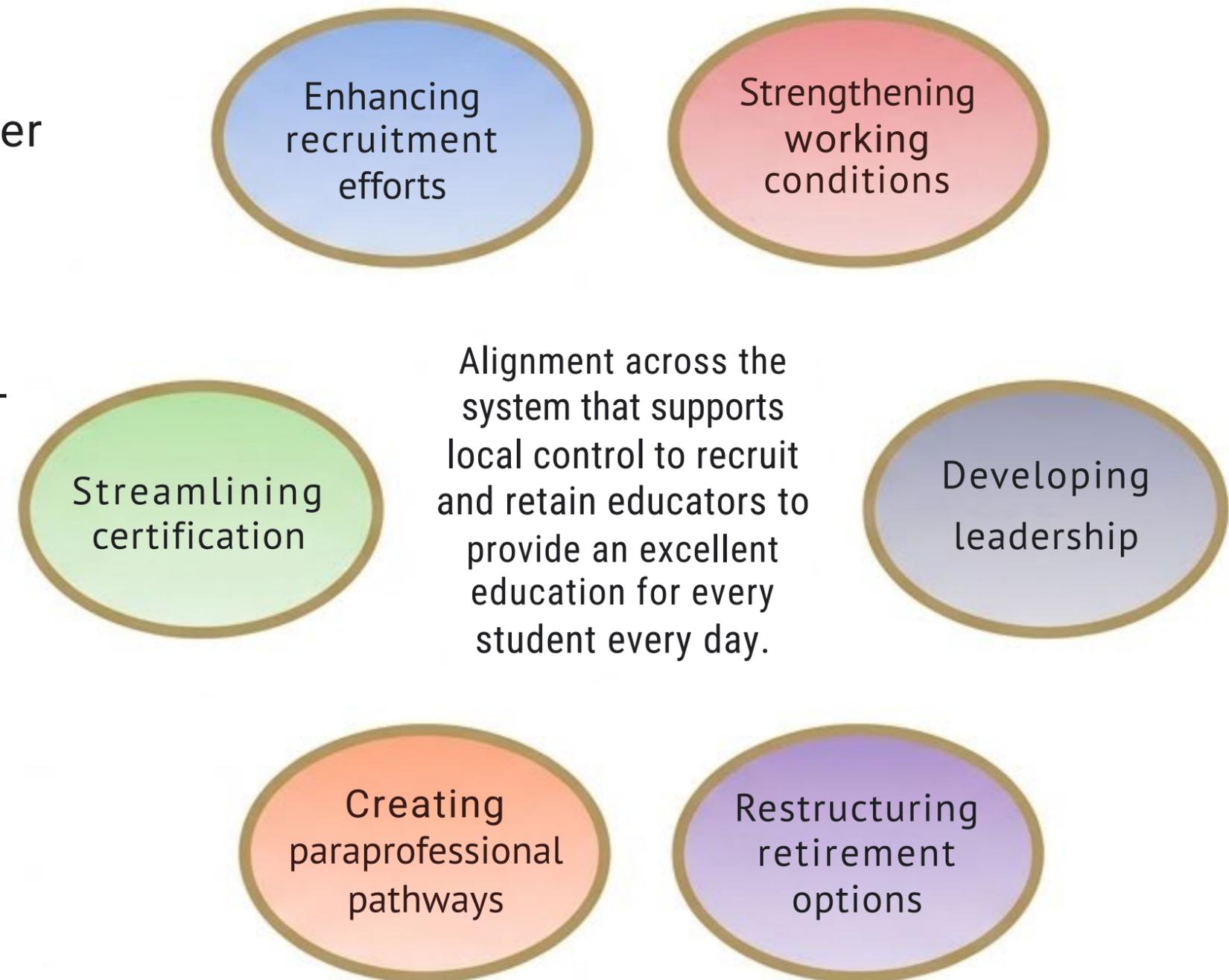
Funding targeted retention initiatives, such as housing upgrades, defined retirement choices, and longevity bonuses, is significantly more cost effective. CSHB 231 intervenes to stop the financial hemorrhage, transforming recruitment budgets into classroom investments

The Blueprint: The TRR Playbook

Initiated by Governor Dunleavy in 2020, the Teacher Retention and Recruitment (TRR) Working Group brought together teachers, principals, superintendents, school boards, and state government officials to build a holistic, systems-centered approach to Alaska's retention crisis.

The result is a comprehensive playbook containing 18 actionable recommendations grouped into six essential organizational health areas.

CSHB 231 is the legislative construction of this blueprint. It moves from debating isolated ideas by directly operationalizing a consensus-driven framework designed by Alaskans, for Alaskans.



Respecting the Profession: Strengthening Working Conditions

Teachers want to be heard, and research proves that districts with better working conditions have higher retention rates. CSHB 231 mandates that district policies are shaped by real educator feedback

The TRR Blueprint (Recommendation 1.2):

Measure working conditions to address the intrinsic and extrinsic variables driving educator satisfaction, ensuring districts can make targeted improvements

The Legislative Reality (CSHB 231, Sections 1, 2 & 8):

Section 1 (AS 14.03.078): Requires the Department to track turnover percentages and use exit interview data to formulate data-based retention strategies

Section 2 (AS 14.03.120): Requires districts to report aggregated exit interview data and the habitability/condition of educator housing to the state

Section 8 (AS 14.20.183): Mandates school districts contract with a neutral third party to conduct exit interviews upon an educator's separation

Cultivating Top-Down Support: Developing Leadership

A culture of mentoring promotes continuous learning, boosts employee engagement, and is highly correlated with teacher retention. Strong teachers need strong, supported principals.

The TRR Blueprint (Recommendations 2.1 & 2.2):

Develop Leadership and Administrator Mentoring. Promote learning throughout the organization by providing structured, top-down professional support for school leaders



The Legislative Reality (CSHB 231, Section 4):

Amends AS 14.07.020 to explicitly require the Department of Education and Early Development to support mentoring programs for school principals and district superintendents

Requires the Department to provide financial planning and retirement training to teachers and paraprofessionals, fostering holistic professional care

Ensuring Long-Term Stability: Restructuring Retirement

Providing long-term security is paramount to keeping our best educators in the state. Educators require choice and financial autonomy as they grow in their careers.

**The TRR Blueprint
(Recommendations 3.1 & 3.2):**
Restructure the TRS/PERS Retirement System to offer a hybrid model prioritizing employee choice, and provide financial education opportunities



**The Legislative Reality
(CSHB 231, Sections 9-24 & 26):**

Sections 9-24: Fundamentally restructure retirement by allowing current members of the defined benefit programs (PERS/TRS) to elect into defined contribution programs, or transfer contributions between plans in lieu of their current participation

Section 26: Implements a transition clause allowing educators in both defined benefit plans a 180-day window to opt into the TRS defined contribution plan

Result: A highly competitive, flexible retirement landscape that puts financial control back in the hands of the educator

Why did Alaska originally opt out of Social Security for teachers?

In 1950 the Social Security Act Amendments increased benefits for the first time and placed the program on the road to the universal coverage it has today. Including introducing COLA (cost-of-living adjustment)

During this time, the program expanded to allow state and local government employees to participate, though it was not mandatory. States could join Social Security, keep their own retirement pension system or offer both

Like today, Alaska faced challenges recruiting teachers to remote communities. Lawmakers believed a state pension with strong benefits would attract educators more effectively than Social Security

The TRS pension offered guaranteed lifetime income, earlier retirement eligibility, higher replacement of salary than social security and state-paid retiree health benefits

Modernizing Educator Certification

Ensuring a pathway to certification and recognizing the experience of international educators when they arrive in Alaska

The TRR Blueprint
(Recommendations 6.1):
Increased number of candidates in
the educator hiring pool



The Legislative Reality
(CSHB 231, Section 7):

Amends AS 14.20.020 (b) adding international accrediting associations teacher certificates to be accepted by the Department

Important Distinction: Reciprocity vs. International Credentials

Reciprocity in the U.S. mainly applies between states through the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) Interstate Agreement

That agreement allows states to review and recognize other U.S. teaching licenses, but it does not automatically apply to foreign certifications

Teachers trained outside the U.S. generally must have their degree and training evaluated for equivalency and may need additional exams or coursework

Currently Alaska districts and hiring partners prioritize recruiting from countries with education systems that are similar to the U.S. Teacher preparation programs include similar coursework, teaching methods, and clinical practice

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Ensuring Safe Housing for Educators

Providing a means for Alaska school districts to provide safe and affordable housing to recruit and retrain educators

The TRR Blueprint
(Recommendations 1.3):
Housing subsidies



The Legislative Reality
(CSHB 231, Section 6):

Amends AS 14.11 by adding AS 14.11.107 creating an educator housing subsidy grant program and AS 14.11.113 creating an educator housing upgrade grant program subject to appropriation by the Department

Making Strategic Investments: Financial Incentives

Financial opportunities compensate for challenging working conditions and tip the balance when educators consider jobs outside of Alaska

The TRR Blueprint

(Recommendations 1.3 & 4.2):

Expand financial opportunities beyond base salary and execute localized recruitment solutions to attract and retain talent in high-need schools



The Legislative Reality

(CSHB 231, Section 25):

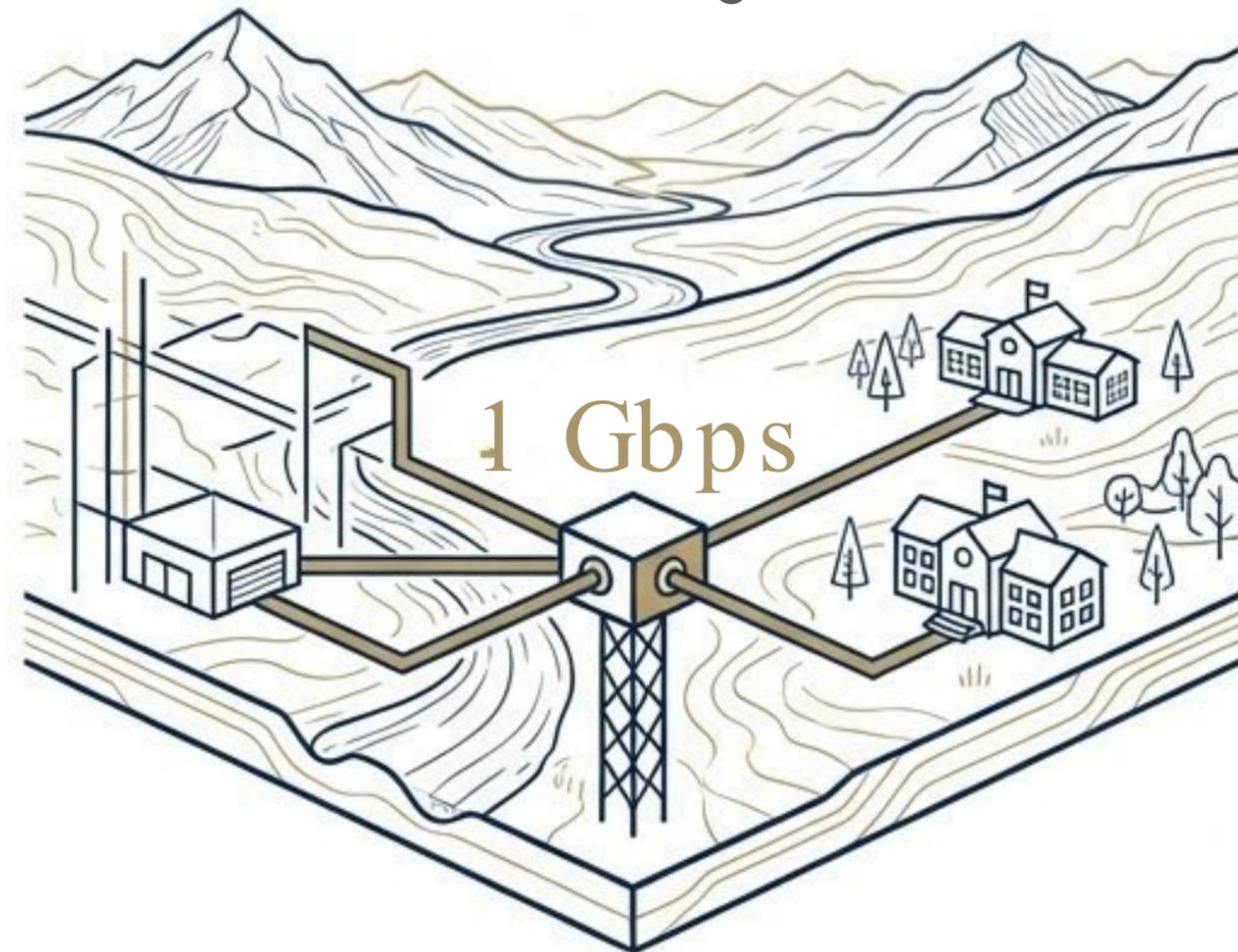
Authorizes lump-sum recruitment and retention bonuses ranging from \$5,000 and \$15,000 for certified full-time teachers and full-time paraprofessionals

Requirements: Paid to professionals who complete the entirety of the school term in eligible districts

Impact: Directly targets the retention of our best teachers and paraprofessionals in the rural and high-need communities that need them the most

Bridging the Rural Divide: Modernizing Classrooms

We cannot recruit modern educators to outdated classrooms. Removing the technological friction of rural teaching is a direct retention strategy



CSHB 231 tackles infrastructure inequity head-on:

Section 3 (AS 14.03.127): Aligns state funding with the federal E-Rate program

The legislation provides financial assistance to eligible districts to cover the remaining local share necessary to achieve a 1 Gigabyte per second (1Gbps) broadband service threshold

The Outcome: Elevates remote districts to modern 21st-century standards, making rural placements highly attractive to top-tier talent while dramatically improving student learning capabilities

Schools and Libraries Universal Service Support Program (E-RATE)

Eligible schools, school districts and libraries may apply individually or as part of a consortium. Funding may be requested under two categories of service

Category 1- Services to a school or library (telecommunications, telecommunications services and Internet access)

Category 2- Services that deliver Internet access within schools and libraries (internal connections, basic maintenance of internal connections, and managed internal broadband services)

Discounts for support depend on the level of poverty and whether the school or library is in an urban or rural area. The discounts range from 20 percent to 90 percent of the costs of eligible services and equipment. E-Rate program funding is based on demand up to an annual Commission-established \$3.9 billion, adjusted annually based on the rate of inflation

Mapping the Legislation: Sectional Analysis Summary

CSHB 231 executes a multi-pronged approach to the TRR Action Plan



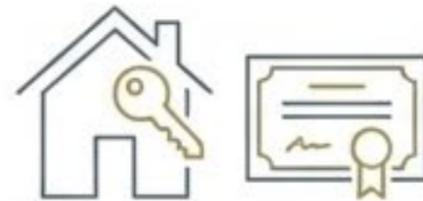
Data, Reporting & Respect (Sections 1-2, 8)

Mandates third-party exit interviews, adds turnover metrics to state reports, and tracks housing habitability to shape data-driven retention policies



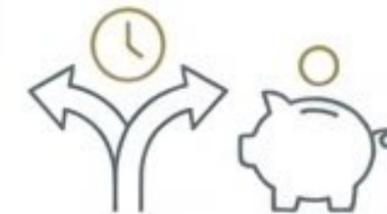
Modernization & Leadership Support (Sections 3-5)

Funds 1 Gbps broadband alignment and establishes mentoring/financial training programs through DEED



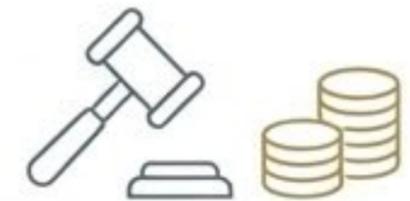
Housing & Certification Equity (Sections 6-7)

Creates educator housing subsidy and upgrade grant programs (Sec 6) and allows DEED to accept international teaching accreditations (Sec 7)



Retirement Choice & Transfer Flexibility (Sections 9-24, 26)

Establishes the legal mechanisms, definitions, and transition windows allowing educators to choose between defined benefit and defined contribution plans



Incentives & Enactment (Sections 25, 27-29)

Authorizes the \$5,000-\$15,000 retention bonuses and outlines immediate and staggered effective dates



A Great State to Call Home

CSHB 231 is not just a bill. It is the alignment of our state's goals to recruit and retain the very best educators for our children.

By directly operationalizing the TRR Playbook, it delivers practical, professional, and policy solutions that stabilize our workforce, respect our professionals and strategically invest in our infrastructure.

Together, we can end the crisis and make Alaska a great state to teach in, a great state to learn in, and a great state to call home.