

The Remote Reality: Support for HB 231



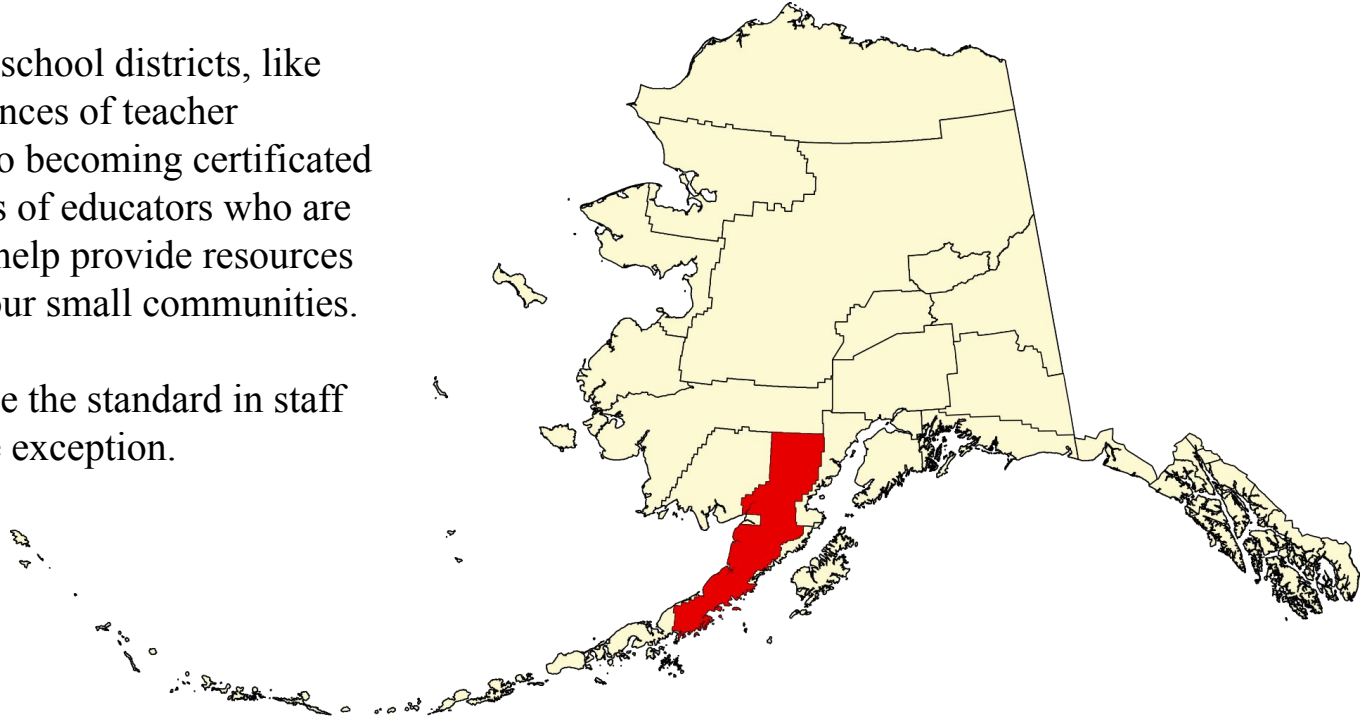
Kasie Luke,
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Proud partner in the Bristol Bay Region
Career and Technical Education
(BBRCTE) Program in Southwest Alaska

The Lake and Peninsula School District (LPSD)

HB 231 empowers remote school districts, like LPSD to honor the experiences of teacher apprentices in their effort to becoming certificated educators, honor the voices of educators who are choosing to move on, and help provide resources for retaining educators in our small communities.

These focus areas should be the standard in staff retention in Alaska, not the exception.



Teacher Turnover

Remote Reality: Turnover for 1 LPSD employee costs between \$25-\$30K. In FY25 we faced 20% turnover and in FY26 we are facing 29% turnover, however, the non monetary cost is greater.

- High turnover prevents students from feeling safe and known in their own schools. When a teacher leaves, a piece of the community stability leaves with them. 44% of LPSD departing staff specifically cited retirement, financial stability, or the high cost of living as a primary driver for their departure. Surveys give us the specific local data needed to address these unique Alaskan challenges.

HB 231 solution: Provides the statewide scale needed to make ‘staying’ the standard, not the exception by allocating bonuses between \$5,000 - \$15,000 for retention and recruitment of teachers and paraprofessionals. Formalizing the exit survey process, we signal to our remaining staff that their experience matters. It turns a resignation into a contribution toward the future success of the district.

Housing Barrier

Remote Reality: LPSD has provided subsidized housing at an average of 62% over the last eight years. Lack of available housing remains a primary barrier to recruitment in remote Alaska communities. In the basic hierarchy of needs, being in a safe and comfortable space will make or break educators' want to stay or leave in remote Alaska where there are few housing options.

HB 231 solution: This bill creates grant programs to help districts fund housing subsidies and perform critical repairs/upgrades to ensure educator housing is safe and habitable.

Data - Driven Retention

Remote Reality: Alaska currently lacks reliable statewide data explaining why educators leave. LPSD has formalized an exit survey to ensure we are honoring the experience of our educators who choose to leave which turns a resignation into a contribution for future success. We have teachers who love Alaska and love our kids, yet 44% are forced to leave because of retirement and financial instability. We aren't just losing employees; we are losing the very people who have successfully integrated into our communities, simply because we aren't providing the financial floor they need to stay. In a separate survey, 92% of our departing staff report that their relationships with students and the local community were the absolute highlight of their career here.

HB 231 solution: Provides all school districts with the opportunity to conduct exit interview providing honest feedback to guide future policy and support systems to retain educators in our most vulnerable communities.

Retirement Flexibility & Financial Security

Remote Reality: Only 3.8% of the certified workforce is currently Alaska Native (ISER, 2024), and 40-80% of Rural and Remote educators are international teachers.

LPSD aims to keep long-time paraprofessionals whole, without significant changes in their retirement during transitions between retirement systems (PERS & TRS). This is an important focus areas for LPSD and in our BBRCTE partnership of four school districts in the Southwest Region because we have developed a “Grow Your Own” apprenticeship program. LPSD currently has 4 paraprofessionals who are working in our schools with our children with the hope of becoming a full-time teacher!

HB 231 solution:

- Provides solution for transfer of contributions between retirement systems under specific circumstances - valuing their experience in remote communities and ideally keeping them as long time full-time certified teachers also leading to less turnover.
- HB 231 also provides financial planning and retirement training to help educators make informed long-term decisions in Alaska.

Leadership & Professional Growth

Remote Reality: Established relationships between leadership of school districts and principals help to support the retention of educators in our classrooms. Providing support for leadership through mentorship is critical.

- LPSD offers reimbursement for completing a Master's of Education in Culturally Responsive Education through our University of Alaska Anchorage partnership in conjunction with BBRCTE, as well as a \$6,000 incentive for completing two additional years of service within our school district. This builds leadership capacity in our educators and our schools and our region.

HB 231 solution: Supports a Statewide mentoring program for principals and superintendents, allowing for the existing support systems to be sustained, recognizing that strong leadership is a cornerstone of teacher retention. Protects the retirement contributions of our "Grow Your Own" teacher apprentices and supports professional mentorship for leadership.

Investing in Stability for Alaska

HB 231 is a commitment to the stability of our remote communities and the future of our students. By addressing the unique remote realities of the Lake and Peninsula School District and many Alaska districts, this bill transforms the educator experience from one of the temporary service to long-term contribution.

When a teacher stays, a community thrives. HB 231 provides the tools to make staying the standard, ensuring our students are safe, known and supported.

Thank you for your listening ears today and for your commitment to Public Education in Alaska.

I am open to any questions you have.

