

Himschoot-

Q: What is an example of an international accrediting association?

A: There are no international accrediting associations currently working with the state of Alaska. The sponsor worked with DEED and thinks a regulatory change allowing third party accreditation companies who already evaluate education credentials to accept a test similar to the Praxis would be the best course of action. This would accomplish the goal of allowing international instructors who come to Alaska with years of teaching experience to omit the requirement of the emergency certification and the Praxis, allowing for longer stays and less fees.

In addition, the regulatory change would expand on what exams may be used for teachers coming to Alaska with teaching experience. The board would look at each country that the state is currently accepting teachers from and gauge those exams.

Q: Who of the paraprofessionals or classified staff are eligible for the bonuses?

A: The sponsor would like the department to move forward with current language in regulation. **Definition of “Paraprofessional”** as defined on [4 AAC 04.900] (2) "paraprofessional" means a person who is not required to have a professional license or certification and who, under the supervision of a teacher or other professional educational service provider, provides instructional or other educational support to a student.

Q: What is considered a hard to staff district.

A: Although recent data shows rural and remote districts having similar overall turnover to urban districts, this can be misleading due to the high number of international visa teachers filling positions in those communities. Without visa teachers, rural and remote areas remain the most difficult places to staff. For example, districts such as Bering Strait School District, Kashunamiut School District, and Kuspuk School District rely heavily on international hires, with some schools having more than 60% international teachers. These districts also face additional recruitment and retention challenges including extremely high costs for groceries and heating oil, geographic isolation, limited housing, and reduced access to services. These combined factors make rural and remote districts significantly harder to staff and retain educators.

Schwanke-

Q: How many teacher positions have been vacant for more than a year?

A: This data is not immediately available and is difficult to track. Some long-term vacancies have been filled with emergency certificates (285 emergency certificates were issued at

the start of the school year). Other vacancies resulted in increased class sizes, teachers instructing outside their certification area, or districts using remote teachers over Zoom. While these positions may appear “filled,” they do not represent stable staffing. For example, trying to meet IEP reading goals for a five-year-old with behavioral challenges through Zoom is not an equivalent replacement for an in-person certified teacher. Positions remaining open for long periods often reflect ongoing staffing shortages rather than lack of need.

Q: How much of the reported turnover is due to contracts not being extended vs how many are outright leaving?

A: We do not currently have this data statewide. We have reached out to districts to gather local numbers and will include this question in future statewide surveys. Based on conversations with districts, we do not believe non-renewals account for a large portion of turnover, but we will provide more information once additional data is collected.

Q: District shall contract with a third party. Representative Schwanke shared her concerns that districts may choose different vendors for this process.

A: The sponsor is in support of how the bill is currently written. This will allow for local control. ACSA would be the vendor of choice if the committee would like to specify an organization and third party to conduct these exit surveys.

Story-

Q: Do bonuses count toward retirement in TRS or PERS? Is the bonus added to the final calculation in the retirement amount?

A: Yes, Section 25 outlines this fact.

Q: What is the cost to a district for exit interviews with a contractor?

A: Costs vary by vendor and district size. One medium-sized Alaska district that implemented exit interviews this year reported approximately \$14,000. Vendor quotes ranged from \$4–\$8 per teacher plus reporting costs. For a statewide survey, most estimates ranged between \$20,000 and \$45,000 depending on reporting and analysis options.

Q: Are bonuses more effective at retaining a teacher compared to increasing base pay?

A: Research suggests that increasing base salary is more effective for long-term retention, or that the best approach combines salary increases with targeted bonuses. A Tennessee program offering \$5,000 retention bonuses found mixed results — some teachers stayed, but overall retention effects were not statistically significant (Springer, Swain, & Rodriguez, 2016). Research from the Learning Policy Institute and CALDER shows that permanent salary increases improve long-term retention, while targeted bonuses can help recruit teachers into hard-to-staff subjects, rural schools, and special education positions. Together, these strategies address both immediate hiring needs and long-term workforce stability.

Eischeid-

Q: What is the cost for educational staff turnover?

A: Research estimates that it costs approximately \$27,000 to replace a teacher and upwards of \$75,000 to replace a principal. These costs include separation costs (9%), recruitment and hiring (24%), and orientation and training (55%). In Alaska, these costs are often higher due to travel for interviews, relocation costs, housing support, and additional mentoring needed for educators new to rural communities.

Dibert-

Q: How long does it take for a principal to become effective at their job?

A: Research indicates that while strong principals create improvements each year, it takes approximately five years to fully implement a vision, improve teaching staff, and establish practices that significantly impact school performance. Wallace Foundation research similarly shows that meaningful school turnaround and sustained improvement require multiple years of consistent leadership. You can read more here:

<https://www.issuelab.org/resources/20544/20544.pdf>

Q: Are the exit interviews providing shocking data? If so, are those questions added to the survey?

A: These surveys are new, so we have not yet seen comprehensive results. However, based on previous Alaska TRR work and district surveys, the findings are not expected to be surprising. Educators consistently cite salary and retirement concerns, working conditions

such as housing, internet access, isolation, access to quality professional development, and support from school and district leadership.