

Alaska Task Force on Education Funding

Alaska Public School Funding



Who we are:

We are a member organization of Alaskan educators who believe in the opportunity for the success of all students through the transformative power of public education.

We advocate for an excellent public education for every student in Alaska. We work to maintain and advance the interests of public school employees in Alaska in service to that mission.

Investing in Public Education

Our top three priorities:

- Supporting Student Success
- Educator Salary and Benefits
- Educator Retirement



Supporting Student Success

Class Sizes So Every Student Can Learn

Increasing pupil to teacher ratios in classrooms creates barriers to student learning.

In overfilled classrooms it becomes increasingly untenable for educators to give students what they need - to reach every student, give individualized attention, manage classroom dynamics, plan student lessons, and assess student work.



Jennifer Hoeldt, 3rd Grade Teacher

"With all the underfunding across the state, the most impact for my classroom has been overcrowding, and not enough support. Especially with the Alaska Reads Act, there's a lot more on my shoulders to do with documentation. When 30+ kids are in your class and 16 of them need extra paperwork...I feel like I'm drowning."



Communities to Support Student Mental Health



School based mental health support improves academic outcomes. School counselors and educators are often the first trained professionals to notice that a student is struggling, allowing for the earliest intervention possible.

The impacts of social media, increased time online and using cell phones contributes to isolation and loneliness and rising rates of anxiety and depression in youth.

Schools Where No Student is Hungry

Free Breakfast and Lunch

- Better focus and problem solving
- Decreased behavioral issues
- Improved attendance
- Improved education outcomes



Educators Whose Careers are in Alaska

Alaska educators are professionals – like engineers, police officers, and doctors. The work we do starts with an interest and a passion, and our craft grows and improves over time.

The longer an educator works with students, the more effective they become. The stronger their school community is. The more students benefit. The more learning happens.



Salary and Benefits

Competitive Salary & Affordable Benefits



The average teacher salary is not keeping pace with inflation.

Recent analysis by the Alaska Retirement Management Board demonstrated that the average teacher salary has annually increased by **0.76%** over the last 10 years. At the same time, inflation has increased by **2-3%** each year. Educators are effectively making less money than when they began their careers in Alaska.

Education Support Staff are making **\$40,504** on average. With Alaska's high cost of living, people are having trouble making ends meet.

Rising healthcare costs further diminish educator take home pay, making retention of current educators and recruitment of new educators a challenge.

Increase Educator Retention and Improve Student Learning

According to the UAA Institute of Social and Economic research:

- The 5 school districts with the LOWEST turnover had 85.8% of students scoring proficient in reading.
- The 5 school districts with the highest turnover had only 46.9% of students scoring proficient in reading.



Retirement

Educators Need a Reliable Retirement

Alaska has been losing public school educators just after they are vested in the Defined Contribution retirement system, taking those funds and going to work in a state with a Defined Benefit retirement.

The Governor's Teacher Recruitment and Retention Task Force surveyed educators across the state about what will encourage them to continue to teach in our schools, setting down roots in Alaska.

The third most important factor identified is a return to a defined benefit retirement for educators.



Kristi Cain, 1st Grade Teacher



"I believe in a defined benefit. I have that, I'm fortunate, but I'm fighting for those teachers who don't. We're not going to have good teachers here in the district unless we get that for them. I think it's important that we all have a defined benefit. It's not fair, and we're losing really good educators because of it."

Pete Daley 2026 Teacher of the Year

"Having a pension provides dignity and it provides stability. I have a pension, and I joke that I have the golden handcuffs. It has allowed me to stay here, have a home and a family, and be able to thrive. Without that, you are not going to attract and retain people here in our schools."



Ben and Cat Walker, 2018 and 2024 Teachers of the Year

"We both became teachers because we are passionate about student learning and love seeing them succeed. We both have made this our career and have excelled in our profession. We love Alaska and are raising our family here. The reality is, with Alaska's current retirement system we have no choice but to consider the options and opportunities that would be afforded to us in other states."



Investing in Public Education Pays Off

Students succeed when we are invested in their futures.

Supporting students, keeping the great educators we have and attracting more quality educators to work with our students in our public schools will strengthen Alaska for generations.



Thank You.

Any questions?

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