



2012-2013 Work Plan for Legislative Appropriation

The following is UAA's Center for Alaska Education Policy Research (CAEPR) work plan for the funding received from the Alaska Legislature for FY 2013. We intend to start with the work laid out below, and then assess where we are and what we have learned in order to move forward with issues that are more difficult to address. For example, we want to complete the "State of the State" report described below before we start tackling the issue of barriers to success. We also want to flip that topic around to look instead at what is working in districts, and to identify promising practices that other districts and schools might adopt. We want to look at the question of achievement on national tests from a slightly different perspective, not only looking at how students do on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests in fourth and eighth grade, but also asking how best to assess how our students are doing from a more complete perspective.

This work plan does not include CAEPR projects funded through contracts and grants from other state, federal and private sources.

- 1) Produce a "State of the State in Education" report in time for the 2013 legislative session.
Timeline : Research in progress, report expected in February or March 2013

This report will address the current state of education in Alaska and place Alaska within the national context. We will look at a number of issues including:

- a) Student achievement and education outcomes on standardized measures (e.g., standardized test scores, graduation and dropout rates) at the state level, for subgroups and for different regions. We also will compare this data with national averages.
- b) Policies and requirements at the state and district level around graduation requirements, including what is required for the Alaska Performance Scholarship, passing the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam, etc.
- c) Policies and practices around the school calendar, exploring the length of the school day, year, and when students are in school and related issues such as student learning loss in the summer
- d) Policies and regulations around professional development at the state and district level

- 2) Conduct a statewide survey of teachers
Timeline: Survey under development, to be launched in March 2013

This survey will be the first comprehensive look at the factors influencing teachers' decisions to stay in their schools/districts or to leave. We will develop the instrument with input from key individuals and organizations including faculty in the schools and colleges of education in Alaska (UA and APU), NEA- Alaska, the Alaska Teacher Placement advisory board, mentors in the Alaska Statewide Mentoring Project, and so on.

Teachers will be asked about issues such as:

- a) Their perceptions of leadership in their school
- b) Their relationships with parents and community
- c) Salary, benefits and financial incentives to stay in their school
- d) Mentoring and professional development

In fall 2013, CAEPR will match data on teacher employment to see which teachers who participated in the survey continued to teach in Alaska and in their same school, and which did not, and analyze the relationship between teacher survey responses and work outcomes.

- 3) Prepare a comprehensive educator supply & demand report.

Timeline: Research in progress. Report to be produced in spring 2013

This will be a comprehensive update of data on teacher and administrator supply, demand and turnover, including:

- a) A comprehensive literature review on factors influencing teacher retention and turnover
- b) Data on the number of teachers and administrators prepared by institutions in-state versus coming in from outside Alaska
- c) Teacher and administrator turnover rates by district
- d) A look specifically at the numbers and career pathways of Alaska Native teachers and administrators

- 4) Prepare a University of Alaska K-12 education preparation report (a biennial report to the Alaska Legislature).

Timeline: The report is currently in working draft form.

This report is prepared for the legislature in accordance with AS 14.40.190(b), which requires the University of Alaska Board of Regents to deliver a report titled “Alaska’s University for Alaska’s Schools” no later than the 30th legislative day of each regular session of the legislature that “describes the efforts of the university to attract, train, and retain qualified public school teachers. The report must include an outline of the university’s current and future plans to close the gap between known teacher employment vacancies in the state and the number of state residents who complete teacher training.” In the upcoming report, we will:

- a) Present data on the number of certificated educators prepared in University of Alaska programs, as well as retention and turnover rates for UA-prepared teachers and administrators and compare these to turnover rates for educators prepared outside of the UA system;
- b) Profile UA efforts to recruit and graduate more certificated educators; and
- c) Address challenges around placing and retaining UA graduates.

5) Conduct a study of recent graduates of UA programs

Timeline: Research underway, will be completed by end of December 2012.

CAEPR is working with Donna Gail Shaw, Professor Emerita, UAA College of Education, to survey 2011 and 2012 teacher preparation graduates from all of the UA campuses on their perceptions of how well they were prepared for teaching. We then will talk with graduates who are not in the classroom to find out why they are not teaching. This will allow us to explore the prevalence of the reasons that have been hypothesized (such as a lack of jobs in their community, inability to relocate, decided decision to pursue a different career path) and to identify other factors affecting graduate employment. Most of this research will be supported by other sources, but some of the work on the University of Alaska K-12 Education Preparation Report will support this study as well.

6) Identify faculty across the colleges and schools of education in Alaska to conduct studies on specific questions raised by the legislature including:

Timeline: AY 2013-2014

- a) How are curriculum decisions made at the state and district level; are there comprehensive curriculum plans; and to what extent does student achievement data feed into these decisions?
- b) What is the state of distance delivered education in Alaska? What evidence is there of quality, effectiveness and efficiency?

Other work CAEPR is doing alone or in collaboration with other organizations will address some of the issues listed in the priorities. For example, CAEPR is now part of the Alaska State Policy Research Alliance (ASPRA), along with the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (EED), superintendents and Senate Education Committee leadership. ASPRA is a federally funded initiative of REL Northwest (the regional education lab) to increase the capacity of CAEPR and EED to conduct education policy research in Alaska as well as the capacity of policymakers to access and use it in their decision-making. The first project of ASPRA is a trajectory study looking at how students move from secondary into post-secondary education, training or work opportunities. This will help us begin evaluating vocational/college preparation tracks, and we plan to build on this work further down the road.