

Alaska 2013-2014

How did Alaska Recruit us?

- Community & School Reputation
- Healthcare benefits
- Competitive Pay with Washington
- Hands on learning experiences
- Family
- Outdoor adventures
- Professional Development opportunities



A peek into classrooms back then-

-In 2013, class sizes ranged between 18 and 23 students.

-Students' specials included PE, art, and music, with options for band, choir, and rock band during school hours.

-Students participated in 3 to 4 field trips a year, which included trips to the local food bank, an overnight stay at the Sea Life Center, and visits to the local theater and Anchorage Children's Theater.

-Overall, the school climate was characterized by enthusiasm and a love for learning.

-The Quest program was available for students.

-The turnover rate in our building was less than 1 to 2 positions per year.



Field trip and rock band

Scary Trends

- Current class sizes range in the intermediate grades range from 27-30 students. One classroom at a neighboring school had a 5th grade teacher step away from teaching in November when her class hit 34 students with heavy behaviors.
- No more music in all of our largest elementary schools. Skyview middle went without music the entire time my son attended.
- Less than 1 field trip per year with many classrooms not taking any.
- No Quest program from 21-23 because of forced transfers to unfilled classroom positions.
- 5 years ago our admin needed to replace 11 positions and the trend has continued as last year we needed to hire more than 12 positions which included teachers in every grade except kinder and 4th.
- It is crucial to note that last year we only lost one position to retirement and two of our positions are filled with long term subs and an emergency certificate.
- It is also crucial to note that educators our hiring team said we would never hire had permanent positions in classrooms less than two years later because they were the only options.
- At the high school level AP classes need to be offered on a rotational schedule. Some basic classes are so full (40 students) that additional students need to be enrolled into distance versions of the same class despite online learning not being their strength.

OUR CLASSROOMS TODAY

Our district's implementation of the READS Act is being carried out through a curriculum called CKLA. This program mandates 90-120 minutes of direct instruction for reading in the elementary grades daily, with little to no flexibility in implementation. The curriculum provides minimal scaffolding and employs a one-size-fits-all model in a post-COVID situation, with 30 students in a room and no pull-out support services during this time.

- This represents a loss of autonomy for teachers to meet students' needs and utilize their extensive education and expertise.

- Hinders the ability to connect with students' backgrounds and interests within the learning environment, resulting in a lack of engagement, connection, and retention.

- Both teachers and students are grappling with this, as there is no joy in teaching or learning in this manner.

- There is no provision for cultural connection within our curriculum.

- Eliminates the majority of classrooms' ability to teach science, social studies, or health to Alaska state standards.

Where will we be if things don't change soon-

Alaska will lose the Alaska 2023 alternate Teacher of the Year, a PAEMST finalist, the ACE teacher of the Year 2019, a 3-year ASTE presenter, a 6 year CHAMPS leadership team member, a Migrant Education STEM club lead, a Magic School AI pioneer, member of the science curriculum committee, Google Certified teacher/trainer, LETRS trained, participant of 5 years of Alaska based STEAM and cultural connection training, book creator expert/presenter, green screen trained, aspiring author for teacher leadership, and more. It will also lose 6 amazing humans this mother is raising who are varsity athletes, top of their graduating classes, academically driven young people who could bless Alaska in whatever they chose to do!



“Best Teacher Ever” -

Eleanor Michaelson 4th grade



Alaska will lose an advocate, a rethinker, a go-getter, a supporter, and an active community member. An SEL coach, a Union Representative, a 3-year ASTE presenter, a Cultural Day Organizer, a 10-year PBIS team member, a Champs member, a Human Civil Rights Committee member, a Magic School AI Pioneer, a 2-year Math committee member, a 3-year Girls on the Run coach, and a lifelong learner. It will lose a Lead Learner whose professional development includes 5 years at Alaska STEAM camps, 2 years attending the School Safety and Wellbeing Summit, participation in the Kagan Institute, LETRS Training, Sources of Strength Mentorship, Fountas and Pinnell training, among others.

Eleven years ago, I took a leap of faith and relocated to Alaska with my husband to embark on my teaching career. Coming from Washington, where opportunities for professional growth and hands-on learning were limited, Alaska offered me a chance to thrive. Despite the initial learning curve, I found my stride with the guidance of exceptional mentors.

In my second year, a transformative experience unfolded at the Southeast Alaska Career and STEAM camp—a five-day immersion in hands-on learning, cutting-edge technology, and leadership development. Over the next four years, I continued participating in this camp, which played a pivotal role in shaping me into the innovative and confident educator I am today.

Regrettably, despite my passion for teaching, I find myself compelled to leave Alaska after next year. The primary reason for my departure is the financial strain—my salary and the absence of retirement benefits make it unsustainable for me to continue teaching here. I've made the difficult decision to return to Washington, where I'll receive a salary increase of approximately **\$32,000**.

Alaska's education system stands to lose more than just a teacher—it's losing an innovator, a leader, and a passionate advocate for student success. As I bid farewell to this extraordinary state, I urge you to consider the challenges facing educators like myself. Investing in teacher compensation and benefits is not just about retaining talent—it's about preserving the quality of education for Alaska's students and securing the future of our state. Thank you.

Ten years ago, I moved up here because of the reputation of Kenai Alaska's schools. I brought my 4 children and watched them flourish because of the solid foundation they had received in our education system. They are graduating at the top of their classes, but unfortunately their opportunities are rapidly dwindling within their highschool worlds because our BSA has remained stagnant for years and we cannot recruit quality educators to fill open positions. **The hard truth that I really need to share is that I have watched that reputation and reality of what takes place in the classroom crumble and I will not be putting my younger two toddlers into Alaska's public schools in their current state.** As a single mom of 6, I will either be taking the risk to open a pod school, or I will be moving to a state that offers better recruitment for higher quality teachers to ensure I am provided for as an educator and the quality of educators my children will have matches that as well. I will move to a state that prioritizes education and the future of their children knowing that unless you fully fund the education system you cannot begin to see the results of true change that data will reflect. If I moved to Washington today, I would have a retirement and I would be making roughly \$38,000 more than I do here.