

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 7, 2022

9:02 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Roger Holland, Chair
Senator Gary Stevens, Vice Chair
Senator Shelley Hughes
Senator Peter Micciche
Senator Tom Begich

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE BILL NO. 225

"An Act relating to a paraprofessional training program; creating a teacher resident certificate; creating a teacher residency program; relating to requirements to issue a teacher certificate; relating to subject-matter expert limited teacher certificates; relating to limited teacher certificates; creating a teacher registered apprenticeship program; and creating a teacher registered apprenticeship program fund."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 225

SHORT TITLE: TEACHER REGISTERED APPRENTICE PROGRAMS

SPONSOR(S): EDUCATION

03/04/22	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/04/22	(S)	EDC, L&C, FIN
03/07/22	(S)	EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205

WITNESS REGISTER

ED KING, Staff
Senator Roger Holland
Alaska State Legislature

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented an overview and the sectional analysis for SB 225.

SONDRA MEREDITH, Teacher Certification Administrator
Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Offered a presentation on teacher certification in Alaska and answered questions on SB 225.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[9:02:12 AM](#)

CHAIR ROGER HOLLAND called the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Micciche, Stevens, Hughes, Begich and Chair Holland.

SB 225-TEACHER REGISTERED APPRENTICE PROGRAMS

[9:02:44 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 225 "An Act relating to a paraprofessional training program; creating a teacher resident certificate; creating a teacher residency program; relating to requirements to issue a teacher certificate; relating to subject-matter expert limited teacher certificates; relating to limited teacher certificates; creating a teacher registered apprenticeship program; and creating a teacher registered apprenticeship program fund."

[9:03:06 AM](#)

ED KING, Staff, Senator Roger Holland, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, stated SB 225 contains suggestions by the Education Committee on addressing Alaska's teacher shortage. Chair Holland's office would be collecting ideas to improve the language used in SB 225. Overall, SB 225 attempts to utilize ideas of other states to fill gaps in statutes that will allow Alaska to address its teacher shortage. He said school district personnel would discuss the shortages they face next week. Today, the teacher certification process will be discussed, and what the current university system does to educate teachers would be addressed in the committee's next meeting.

MR. KING stated that SB 225 Section 1 (18) creates a pre-apprenticeship program. It is a simple change that directs the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) to work with school districts to encourage high school students to enter

the teaching field through the registered apprentice program that SB 225 would establish.

[9:05:28 AM](#)

At ease.

[9:05:51 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND reconvened the meeting.

[9:06:00 AM](#)

MR. KING said Section 2 creates a teacher residency program. Residency refers to a structured environment where a person with technical knowledge can gain practical experience, similar to a medical residency. An aspiring teacher who has completed the coursework would co-teach with a mentor to gain the necessary experience. The teacher residency program was created parallel to the subject matter expert certificate. It was specifically designed for people that do not have subject matter expertise but have a four-year degree and are trying to become a teacher. It creates a teacher residence certificate, so teachers in the classroom are fully certified under a provisional teaching certificate.

Section 3 clarifies the current requirement for Alaska studies and multicultural education or cross-cultural communications. The training requires three university semester hours under current law. Feedback from stakeholders suggests that the training could be provided by another means and save the aspiring teacher the cost of tuition. Section 3 removes the three-semester requirement and directions the Board of Education to adopt regulations that outline training. Furthermore, a provision provides explicit authority for a school district to set the requirements higher if it is unhappy with the requirements set by the Board of Education.

[9:08:33 AM](#)

Section 4 addresses changes to subject-matter expert certificates under AS 14.20.022. This certificate is for teachers with a four-year degree and some expertise who do not have a teaching certificate. These professionals are gaining practical experience in the classroom while doing coursework. However, they do not have the strict requirement to co-teach with a mentor. Section 4 loosens the timeline for students to become fully certified. It also expands the universe of eligible programs so that a person can take a non-traditional pathway to full certification. Certification would not have to be through accredited university-level classes.

[9:09:36 AM](#)

Section 5 creates more time for subject matter experts to become certified and is a conforming change to Section 4.

Section 6 is a conforming change to provide a consistent timeline for subject-matter experts to become certified.

Section 7 is a technical change to the limited teacher certificates for people who do not have a four-year degree and only teach specific vocational or technical courses such as Alaska Native languages and military science. Section 7, lines 16-18, remove the "for which the board determines by regulation that baccalaureate degree training is not sufficiently available." The fear is that in the world today, where university courses are widely available on the internet, that language might hinder the ability to hire somebody with that expertise. It is a clarifying change.

[9:10:54 AM](#)

Section 8 addresses the teacher registered apprenticeship program. It is a pathway for a paraeducator to become a fully certified teacher. It is like other apprentice programs where a person receives on-the-job training by working full-time while simultaneously completing coursework. It ultimately culminates in a four-year degree and a full teaching certificate. On page 9, line 14, the teacher registered apprenticeship program fund is a vehicle for the legislature to provide funds to the program. SB 225 also authorizes receipt authority for districts to use other means to support the apprenticeship program, such as scholarships or donations from private or Native corporations. It ensures the funds are available for a district's apprenticeship program.

[9:12:15 AM](#)

Section 9 is a clarifying change that adds the apprenticeship program fund to the list of non-general fund accounts.

Section 10 repeals AS 14.20.022(c), which requires a competency exam for a subject-matter expert certificate because the requirement was moved to AS 14.20.022(b). It is a technical change.

[9:12:44 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS stated he gave these ideas much thought. He knows from personal experience that many people should be teaching but do not have certification. Certification is

important because it ensures the best teachers are in front of Alaska's students. He asked whether these ideas weaken the certification process.

[9:13:10 AM](#)

MR. KING replied that the intent of SB 225 is to provide an alternative, more accessible means of achieving qualified teachers. The goal is to maintain the same certification standard, not to degrade the standard. He stated that Ms. Meredith could speak to the requirements of the alternative programs.

SENATOR STEVENS stated that in his district, there are villages with highly qualified paraeducators who have not been able to become certified because they do not have a bachelor's degree. He asked how SB 225 would help individuals who have a lot of classroom experience but cannot leave home to obtain a degree.

[9:14:34 AM](#)

MR. KING replied that the scenario would come under the teacher apprentice program. It is for people already working in a classroom as paraeducators who need a mechanism to take coursework and receive on-the-job credit towards degree requirements. Previous post-secondary education and experience would be considered and allow people to graduate sooner. Currently, if a person does not have a degree, the only option to teach is a Type M certificate or substitute teaching. The intent of the apprentice program is to provide a pathway to full certification for people who do not have a four-year degree. The university has said that the coursework could be delivered remotely.

[9:15:48 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES said she likes that the apprentice program gives credit for on-the-job training but wanted details. She said that a four-year teaching degree has an education requirement followed by a residency. A paraprofessional would need to fulfill the required academic coursework while working. She opined that the academic piece would need to be streamlined for the paraprofessionals since they would attend staff meetings and learn while on the job. Like Senator Stevens, she wants paraprofessionals to be thoroughly trained; however, from her experience in a teacher training program, a significant portion of the coursework for the degree was not very applicable or helpful. She stated her belief that the bachelor's program could be trimmed down since the paraprofessional would be getting on-the-job training. She asked whether DEED or the University of

Alaska would determine and oversee the required coursework and job training. She wondered how the program would transfer to other universities across the country if the University of Alaska were in charge.

[9:18:16 AM](#)

MR. KING stated that the concept would be that a school district would sponsor an apprentice. The school district would develop a program with a university or any allowable institution that could generate coursework and verify that the on-the-job training qualifies as part of the apprenticeship program. The program would have to be approved by the federal Office of Apprenticeship to be registered. It would also have to be approved by the State Board of Education as a traditional or non-traditional program depending on whether a university could fit the program within existing coursework. Part of the process for the apprenticeship program would be for an individual to reach full certification by the end of the apprenticeship. He stated that the University of Alaska, the Office of Apprenticeship, and the Department of Labor would speak more to the mechanics of the program in the future.

[9:20:11 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES asked how the teacher residency program would work for individuals with non-teaching degrees. She asked if they would have to complete the entire teacher education program or if it would be streamlined.

MR. KING explained that the difference with the residency program is that the aspiring teacher already has a four-year degree but lacks pedagogy coursework, so the process would not involve the Office of Apprenticeship. He stated that the alternative pathway allows resident teachers and subject-matter experts to become certified teachers without compromising certification standards. The school district sponsoring the resident would have to develop or approve a training plan that would need approval from the Board of Education. The allowance for the board to approve non-traditional or fast-track programs was part of the change made to SB 225 at the bottom of page 7.

[9:21:41 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES asked for clarification that while a school district would develop a plan, the Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development would approve it, not a district school board.

MR. KING replied that is correct.

[9:22:02 AM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE stated he was focused on the burden the department would face in creating subject matter exams but then realized AS 14.20.020(i) allows the department to use nationally certified exams as proof of expertise. He expressed concern about subject-matter expert teachers taking time away from certified teachers serving as mentors who may not have expertise in the same field. He asked for an explanation of Section 6.

MR. KING answered that Section 6 changes AS 14.20.022, subject-matter expert certificates, rather than the limited Type M certificates under AS 14.20.025. Section 6 refers to someone with a four-year degree and professional experience who needs more time to meet the requirements of the training preparation program and the coursework necessary to become fully certified. The AS 14.20.025 limited certificates are more aligned with the example of a welder, where the changes do not apply. He stated he would defer to the department to answer the question further.

[9:23:57 AM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE stated he was referring to AS 14.20.022 but would wait for an answer from the department on the role of mentors for subject-matter expert teachers.

SENATOR BEGICH asked that definitions be provided for "nontraditional" and "alternative teaching education programs," found in SB 225, page 7, lines 28-29. He stated that providing the definition would give a clearer understanding of what is being considered. He expressed his belief that the terms could be widely and wildly interpreted over time without being defined.

MR. KING deferred to DEED to answer the question.

[9:24:59 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS asked that foundational information be provided on the various types of teacher certifications. He has heard of Type M certification but wonders if there are A-L certifications.

CHAIR HOLLAND asked if Mr. King knew what Type M stands for.

MR. KING replied he would set up a foundational education presentation on the topic.

[9:25:52 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES asked for a cheat sheet with the presentation.

CHAIR HOLLAND stated that Sondra Meredith would provide foundational knowledge regarding the current teacher certification processes and pathways.

[9:26:29 AM](#)

SONDRA MEREDITH, Teacher Certification Administrator, Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), Juneau, Alaska, stated she has been in the position for 15 years. She was a classroom teacher in Kake and is a product of Alaska's educational system as she graduated from Thorne Bay.

MS. MEREDITH began her presentation by stating that the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) defines its mission as "An excellent education for every student every day." The department's vision is taken from AS 14.03.015. The vision is that "All students will succeed in their education and work, shape worthwhile and satisfying lives for themselves, exemplify the best values of society, and be effective in improving the character and quality of the world about them." She stated that her role at the department is to provide information and resources on leadership around teacher certification and education.

[9:28:02 AM](#)

MS. MEREDITH turned to slide 3 and said that four years ago, the department met with stakeholders and identified five shared priorities for education. She said her presentation would focus on number four, "Prepare, attract, and retain effective education professionals." The presentation would also help the committee understand the certification system and how its statutes and regulations interact. In addition, she would talk about the requirements and limitations of the certificate types. She would provide the department's definition of the approved teacher preparation program and how it has morphed over the years. Pathways to certification would also be discussed.

MS. MEREDITH advanced to slide 4 and stated that the slide shows the number of teaching certificates in Alaska from 2018 - 2022. Professional certificates represent 85 percent of the certificates currently issued. She noted that the database is dynamic and changes daily. In 2022, about 14,000 teaching certificates were issued, excluding administrators and special service providers. The small band on top of the professional certificate bars represents the initial licensures and the emergency certificates, while the smallest band represents

limited certificates, such as Type M. The graph shows the relative issuance of the various certificates in DEED's database.

[9:30:31 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND asked at what interval are teaching certificates renewed.

MS. MEREDITH replied that professional certificates are renewed every five years, initial certificates are between 1-3 years, and limited certificates are typically five years.

SENATOR BEGICH stated that from 2018-2022 the number of initial certificates doubled. He asked if it is an indicator of the teacher turnover that Alaska is seeing.

MS. MEREDITH replied that there are things that can be pulled from the data but she is hesitant to opine on the doubling. However, she will address it in the presentation.

[9:31:16 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH asked her to also address the decline of approximately 450 professional certificates.

MS. MEREDITH responded that she would address it.

[9:31:44 AM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE asked what number satisfies the need for teachers.

MS. MEREDITH sought clarification on the question.

CHAIR HOLLAND restated the question. He asked how many teachers are required to satisfy the educational requirements of the school systems.

MS. MEREDITH replied that for the past five years the state has required between 7,000-8,000 teachers.

[9:32:22 AM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE asked what 14,000 professional certificates represents and whether certified teachers in Alaska choose not to work.

MS. MEREDITH responded that some certified teachers choose not to work. Others have taught for a long time and switched to positions outside of teaching, such as herself.

[9:32:55 AM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE said that the state needs to identify alternative ways to put people in classrooms and what it would take to draw an adequate number of certified teachers back into the classroom.

CHAIR HOLLAND commented that there are bills addressing teacher retirement.

SENATOR BEGICH stated that DEED conducted a recruitment and retention study to identify why teachers leave the classroom. The committee could take a deeper look at the study. He stated there are bills addressing some of the issues the study identified. He said it is up to the legislature to decide whether it will pass legislation to address the problems.

[9:34:23 AM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE pointed out that twice as many teachers live in the state as are required to run the school districts. He expressed his belief that something was missing and that new programs would not fix the gap since it would only be a matter of time before the new teachers would choose to leave.

SENATOR HUGHES suggested that while retirement and pay could incentivize teachers, it is a tough job. She wonders what could be done culturally to make teaching a more rewarding and pleasant experience.

[9:36:19 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH said that the answers are in the teacher retention study, which identified not just retirement and monetary issues. It identified school and leadership cultures, the importance of connection to the community, and feelings of inclusion. Furthermore, it identified support from DEED to teachers beyond mentoring programs, which underscores the support elements of SB 111 and HB 164. The theory from the Moore court case identified some of these ideas. However, the theory did not appear to make sense until evidence from research supported it. The concern Senator Hughes expressed is being addressed through the committee's work and various bills. It is a robust discussion, and SB 225 addresses a tiny piece of it. He stated that the committee must start somewhere, or it will get nowhere.

[9:38:05 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS asked Ms. Meredith if she would be included in the 14,000 professional certificated teachers if she did not renew her certification.

MS. MEREDITH stated that she would not be included in the data if her certificate expired.

SENATOR STEVENS sought confirmation that the chart only includes people who have recertified.

MS. MEREDITH responded yes.

[9:38:55 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND asked how many teachers are employed in Alaska's school system.

MS. MEREDITH replied that around 7,000 teachers are employed, but the exact number could be found in the turnover report which DEED submits to the legislature annually.

SENATOR HUGHES clarified that the number of certified teachers in Alaska is not 12,000 because the initially certified teachers must be included, which increased the number to 14,000. Of the 14,000, roughly 7,000 are currently teaching. This speaks to Senator Micciche's point that half of all certified teachers in Alaska choose not to teach. However, it is encouraging that certifications are being maintained because there is a teacher shortage across the country. If Alaska addressed some issues, in-state teachers might return to teaching.

[9:40:36 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND asked whether teachers are maintaining their certifications or have the certifications they have not expired.

MS. MEREDITH stated she encourages teachers to maintain their professional certification because recertification can lead to additional certification requirements.

[9:41:16 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS asked how many certified teachers are employed as administrators by school districts in Alaska.

MS. MEREDITH said most principals and superintendents maintain teacher certification and other certifications. She offered to provide a more exact number but guesstimated about one thousand.

SENATOR STEVENS asked if that included people working for DEED and the State Board of Education.

MS. MEREDITH said many of the positions at DEED require a teaching certificate.

[9:42:18 AM](#)

MS. MEREDITH turned to slide 6 and discussed regular teacher certification. For the presentation, she included professional, retired/lifetime, and master certificates in this category because the professional requirements are similar. She said regular certification in Alaska relies on AS 14.20.20 and 4 AAC 12.305. She then stated the requirements listed under the statute and regulation.

[9:44:08 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH asked for an explanation of the term "lifetime certificate."

MS. MEREDITH said that when a teacher retires through DEED's system, the board is required to offer a lifetime certificate to those with enough classroom teaching experience. The certificate does not need to be renewed.

[9:44:47 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH asked if the 12,199 certified teacher count included lifetime certificated individuals that are not required to renew in five years.

MS. MEREDITH responded that it does, but the information on slide 8 shows the number of professional, lifetime, and master certificates issued between 2018 and 2022. It also indicates that the issuance of professional certificates is on a downward trend while other certifications are slightly increasing. About 100 new retired certificates were added yearly, while master certificates have remained about the same. She explained that master certificates are issued to recognize nationally board-certified individuals.

[9:45:43 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH noted that in 2022, the number of lifetime/retired certificates was similar to the number of initial certificates issued in 2022. He said correlation is not causation, but it is interesting that the numbers are so close.

[9:46:04 AM](#)

MS. MEREDITH said that society is at the tail end of the baby boomers, which means many people are retiring or preparing to retire. She opined that the increase in lifetime certificates could be partly attributed to that. The shortage is more than what is happening in Alaska's microcosm. Nationally, there are not enough people to fill in the gaps.

[9:46:51 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES asked if the Type M certificate is the master certificate.

MS. MEREDITH replied no, Type M is for limited certification.

[9:47:09 AM](#)

MS. MEREDITH moved to slide 9 to explain the approved teacher preparation program and its history. She said that when AS 14.20.20 was written, the bachelor's degree and teaching components formed the program. Over time, teacher preparation programs started developing masters and post-bachelorette programs that allowed a person with a degree to get additional training to become a teacher. For example, a person with a degree in math could complete the teacher preparation coursework and become a math teacher. This was done without revamping the statute. So as time moved forward, laws were written that addressed the idea of a teacher preparation program in combination with another degree or expert experience. For example, AS 14.20.22 provides for a limited master's expert certificate.

[9:49:26 AM](#)

MS. MEREDITH moved to slide 10 and said that since AS 14.20.20 was not changed, the change is managed by knowing its history and through the 1970 interstate agreement with the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC). It is recognized that a bachelor's degree or higher program of study that provides specific pedagogical knowledge and a student teaching component is required to be a certified teacher. The University of Alaska (UA) offers bachelor's degrees in teaching, a post-bachelorette program, and a Master's in the Art of Teaching degree. Approved teacher preparation programs always have a study plan aligned with state or national standards. Alaska has a set of teaching standards that it uses with its universities. UA also uses the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) standards. She mentioned other entities that support teacher preparation standards and are permitted to produce teachers. She stated that Alaska assesses out-of-state certification

applications based on these entities and standards. She noted that the NASTEC agreement also made non-traditional student teaching methods possible, such as being employed as an educator if the individual holds a bachelor's degree.

[9:52:49 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH asked if "nontraditional" is defined in SB 225, page 7, line 28.

MS. MEREDITH replied yes. When nontraditional approaches are discussed, it refers to teaching while learning pedagogical knowledge.

[9:53:23 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH asked Ms. Meredith to define the "alternative teacher education program" as referred to in SB 225.

MS. MEREDITH advanced to slide 11, which showed a breakdown of how approved teacher preparation programs are viewed in Alaska compared to other jurisdictions in the United States. She said Alaska looks for unity, and statutes only recognize university-based programs. Furthermore, the board requires the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) to approve the programs. She stated that CAEP was used because it can provide oversight that the department does not have the capability of delivering. Other jurisdictions recognize universities and alternative providers, such as Teach for America (TFA), school districts, and others, to operate teacher preparation programs. All entities must go through national accreditation or rigorous state approval processes to be utilized.

[9:55:41 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH asked if the non-traditional providers listed on slide 11 would be alternative teacher education programs.

MS. MEREDITH replied yes.

SENATOR BEGICH said he is concerned because he knows that TFA has lower standards than Alaska regarding identifying quality teachers. He asked if a school district could be any school district in America.

[9:56:41 AM](#)

MS. MEREDITH replied that regardless of the jurisdiction, programs would have to go through an approval process, including school districts.

[9:56:59 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH replied he understood. However, he questioned whether the department would be able to handle the analysis necessary to determine that the quality of a rigorous approval process for school districts and educational agencies was maintained. He asked what the department would need to assure the committee that the quality of teacher training would be maintained. The committee would like to see alternative pathways created but does not want to reduce the quality of teacher education.

[9:58:56 AM](#)

MS. MEREDITH said the approval process would have to be developed through the department because the only means that teacher preparation programs are recognized in Alaska is through CAEP accreditation. States that use districts and other agencies are often required to use an accreditation process. She said there would be more work for the department's teacher certification office because nationally accredited universities and other entities are moving towards alternative pathways.

SENATOR HUGHES asked if a school district's proposal would have to be reviewed by CAEP and the State Board of Education for approval.

MS. MEREDITH replied yes, but it would take time for CAEP to begin since data would need to be collected. For example, UAA lost approval for its initial programs. It will take several years to gather data to send to CAEP for the program to be fully accredited. So, there would be a period of only state approval while waiting for CAEP accreditation to begin.

[10:00:36 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS said the legislature is responsible for the department's K- 12 education and the University of Alaska. Since Ms. Meredith mentioned UAA's accreditation issue, he asked whether the university is doing a good job, if it could be doing more, and how its relationship is with DEED.

MS. MEREDITH said that UA has solid programs based on her observations through CAEP accreditation. The university works at recruiting students to participate in its programs by trying to be more attractive and flexible. More programs have been implemented online, giving rural Alaskans more learning opportunities. It is also producing more teachers for the state. She opined that the university has always been willing to work

with DEED and discuss its policies and program. She opined that DEED's relationship with UA is strong.

[10:02:50 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS stated that the legislature is uniquely positioned because it works with both entities. He asked the department to let the legislature know if there is something it can do to support the university in creating the best teachers and programs possible.

[10:03:18 AM](#)

MS. MEREDITH moved to slide 12 to discuss initial teacher certification, a 2- or 3-year certificate that most new teachers enter the profession possessing. Requirements missing, if any, are usually two years of teaching experience or Alaska studies.

MS. MEREDITH turned to slide 13 and said the out-of-state regulatory certificate is for individuals coming to Alaska with a valid out-of-state teaching certificate. She listed the requirements and limitations of the certificate and stated that it is not renewable.

[10:05:02 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH asked whether an out-of-state certificated teacher accrues time that can be counted towards tenure once a professional in-state certificate is obtained.

MS. MEREDITH replied that is correct.

MS. MEREDITH said that there is a statutory provision for initial re-employment for teachers that do not renew their license before it expires. Slide 14 listed the requirements and limitations of the provision.

[10:06:25 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH asked whether a teacher would receive a year of credit towards tenure under the initial re-employment certificate. He opined that they would not get credit since they would have spent their Teacher's Retirement System (TRS) funds upon leaving service.

MS. MEREDITH replied that it would depend on whether the individual had retired. If they had retired and were returning to teaching, they would need to suspend their TRS payments. She stated she did not know all the details of returning from retirement.

SENATOR BEGICH asked how many people are teaching under this provision.

MS. MEREDITH replied that the question would be addressed later in the presentation.

[10:07:36 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS asked if individuals under the initial re-employment provision could resume teaching immediately.

MS. MEREDITH replied yes.

MS. MEREDITH turned to slide 15 and stated that the initial proof of program enrollment is a certificate found in AS 14.20.022. It is for individuals that have a bachelor's degree. SB 225 specifies that a school district must sponsor an individual. She listed the requirements and limitations of the certificate and mentioned that at the end of two years the individual must have met the requirements for professional certification. However, SB 225 would extend the timeline to three years because working full-time and completing coursework in two years is challenging.

[10:10:11 AM](#)

MS. MEREDITH stated that the emergency certificate is an initial certificate. Districts use it for people who have not completed an initial certification. Some school districts use the emergency certificate, which is allowed by statute even though it went out of regulation in 2002. It no longer has a process. It was removed from regulation in response to federal requirements but was brought back by the State Board of Education out of need following the pandemic. The emergency certificate can be utilized by a district that cannot find a certified teacher. A person must meet its requirements. Certification is limited to one school year, is nonrenewable, and does not count towards tenure.

[10:12:08 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH asked if due diligence by DEED is required before issuing the emergency certificate.

MS. MEREDITH replied yes.

CHAIR HOLLAND reiterated that a school district would define the emergency, and DEED would approve it. However, its issuance is not dependent on what is happening at a national level.

[10:12:37 AM](#)

MS. MEREDITH replied yes, although emergency requests are still being received for COVID-related reasons.

SENATOR MICCICHE commented that slide 17 shows a dramatic increase in the use of emergency certificates. He opined that the increase is probably due to COVID. He asked if a certificate could be issued for a different emergency to an individual who taught under a previous emergency certificate. He hopes individuals who work under an emergency certificate will become certified through one of the many available programs. He stated he supports SB 225 because it supports the possibility of identifying incredible teachers.

MS. MEREDITH agreed.

[10:14:08 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH asked if teacher turnover and the inability to recruit justified issuing an emergency certificate.

MS. MEREDITH replied yes, and it has been used as a reason for emergency certificates to be issued.

SENATOR BEGICH asked if the drop from 260 - 193 in the number of emergency certificates issued was indicative of COVID and whether a continued decline was anticipated.

MS. MEREDITH replied that she does not have a crystal ball. She stated her belief that the emergency certificate is often used for individuals who have trouble gathering paperwork. People coming into the country from overseas sometimes need extra time to gather their J-1 visa documents. She has also seen people taking advantage of the emergency certificate to move into a teacher preparation program. She stated that a lot is at play, and she does not know what the future holds.

[10:15:48 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH expressed concern that a rarely used exception could become the norm because of a loophole. He asserted he desired DEED to maintain a strict emergency certificate application. He stated his understanding that the state department caused some delays in J-1 visas. Although teachers from the Philippines working in western Alaska are superb, he suggested DEED provide the committee a list of reasons for issuing emergency certificates.

[10:16:48 AM](#)

MS. MEREDITH resumed speaking about slide 17, which contains a breakdown of the number of people in Alaska holding various certificates. She noted OOS (out-of-state) certificates have grown over 100 percent in the past five years. About 30 percent of individuals who enter the state do not get a second year on their certificate because they do not complete the competency exam as required. For information purposes, some veteran teachers coming into Alaska either refuse to take the competency exam or are unable to pass it.

[10:18:19 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES stated she believes her question was answered because 997 out-of-state teachers came in, and 30 percent are not returning because they failed the competency exam.

MS. MEREDITH replied that they did not necessarily fail but did not provide information to DEED and therefore did not get a second year on the certificate.

CHAIR HOLLAND commented that they may have decided not to pursue teaching in Alaska.

MS. MEREDITH replied exactly. Incremental factors play into a person's decision whether to stay in Alaska.

MS. MEREDITH said that early career teachers (ECTs) receive support from their district through induction and mentoring projects. UAF K-12 outreach assists through the Alaska Statewide Mentor Project (ASMP) which the legislature has supported financially. It allows assigned mentors to fly to areas and offer support. The Educators Rising program targets high school students that want to become teachers. It is a growing program. She encouraged the committee to contact UAF K-12 Outreach for more information.

[10:20:11 AM](#)

MS. MEREDITH moved to slide 19 and discussed the lettering of limited certificates. The lettering system was for the department's database. Type A certificates were regular teaching certificates, Type B certificates were administrative, and Type C were special services.

CHAIR HOLLAND asked if there was a Type J, K, and L that led to a Type M.

MS. MEREDITH said the system was not sequential.

CHAIR HOLLAND said he could see "M" standing for "mentor."

MS. MEREDITH replied that Type M is a limited certificate provided under AS 14.20.25, which allows individuals with subject matter expertise in Native language and culture, military science, and career and technical education to teach in their specialized area. She then stated the requirements and limitations of the certificate found on slide 20.

[10:22:41 AM](#)

MS. MEREDITH stated that Type I is a regulatory certificate. It is used for individuals who are not part of a teacher preparation program and do not have a bachelor's degree but have experience as a paraprofessional. Until recently, expertise in local Native culture was also required. Type I certificated teachers participate in programs such as dual language enrollment. The individuals certified through this mechanism are doing a blend of a Type M certification by teaching Native language and culture in conjunction with a regular certified classroom teacher. The teachers share the students during the day, so they receive Alaska indigenous language and culture experience while also receiving English reading, writing, and math instruction. The responsibilities of the Type I teacher can increase as progress is made towards obtaining a bachelor's degree, similar to the residency program. She continued to provide information on the requirements and limitations of the Type I certificate listed on slide 21. She said SB 225 would make it possible for the individual to be compensated during the student teaching portion of the degree program.

[10:25:51 AM](#)

MS. MEREDITH moved to slide 22 and said that for an individual to move from a limited to a regular certificate they must:

- Earn a bachelor's degree
- Complete a teacher preparation program
- Satisfy testing requirement
 - Basic competency exam (reading, writing, and mathematics)
 - Content area exam

MS. MEREDITH said slide 23 provides the type and number of valid limited certificates issued for the past five years. She stated that the World Language certificate is regulatory and was created due to difficulties filling language positions at immersion schools. The positions were for non-indigenous languages, so they could not come under the Type M certificate. The limited Type W certificate is found primarily in the Anchorage and Mat-Su school districts.

[10:27:06 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS asked whether limited certificates were starting avenues to help individuals become certified teachers or a way around the rules because, in the end, certification requirements must be met to become a certified classroom teacher.

MS. MEREDITH replied that the Type M certificate does not require an individual to become a fully licensed teacher. It recognizes and values a person's expertise to the extent that DEED is willing to provide them a license so that students can access Alaska Native cultures and languages, military science, and essential career and technical areas. She stated it is difficult to convince a journeyman carpenter to get a 4-year degree to be a teacher because they already have experience and have trained others. She said schools are lucky to have their expertise. Individuals under limited certificates can maintain the certification indefinitely.

SENATOR MICCICHE said Senator Stevens has always been concerned about not cutting corners and maintaining certification. Still, some people have worked in other careers and would be amazing teachers. He opined that there is a point at which the state needs to look at doing things differently so that gaps can be filled by people who could be great in the classroom. He asked whether SB 225 would help the Office of Teacher Certification get people into the classroom even though they may have been working elsewhere.

[10:29:50 AM](#)

MS. MEREDITH replied that SB 225 provides pathways and that this is important because it is difficult for an individual who is a paraprofessional to go back to school. Across the nation, different routes are being discussed and sought-after to help people become certified that either work with students or want to work with them. SB 225 provides a pathway to full certification. SB 225 is a piece of legislation that will be good for moving Alaska in the right direction.

[10:31:04 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES said that of the certificate types listed on slide 23, only Type I is designed for a person to achieve a bachelor's degree and full teacher certification. She asked how many people have attained full certification using the Type I certificate. She concluded that if people take longer than 10-15 years to transition, the Type I certificate serves as a way around full certification.

[10:31:24 AM](#)

MS. MEREDITH said the Lower Kuskokwim School District recently brought the Type I certificate back into use. Since the school district has only been using it for about five years there is little data. She recommended contacting that district for more information.

CHAIR HOLLAND commented that the number of Type I certificates has ranged from 14-38 over the five years, a very small percentage of the 14,000 teachers in Alaska.

MS. MEREDITH advanced to slide 25 and provided the statute and definitions governing short and long-term substitute teachers.

[10:34:14 AM](#)

MS. MEREDITH said that her office also issues about 200 student-teacher authorizations per year which permit students to complete the classroom teaching portion of a degree program. The office also issues a special education alternative route certificate that enables certified classroom teachers to teach special education while earning special education certification.

MS. MEREDITH asked if the committee wanted to learn more about micro-credentialing, fast-track teacher preparation programs, and how endorsements are issued.

[10:34:59 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH suggested that the information could be presented as a memo from DEED.

SENATOR MICCICHE requested Ms. Meredith include the teacher gaps and how positions are being filled in the memo. He asked if this is doable since the department knows the number of teachers and certificate types.

MS. MEREDITH said she would try obtaining the numbers from staff accounting and the certification database.

[10:36:37 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND held SB 225 in committee.

[10:36:50 AM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Holland adjourned the Senate Education Committee meeting at 10:36 p.m.