

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**  
**SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 23, 2022

9:04 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
03/07/22	(S)	Heard & Held
03/07/22	(S)	MINUTE(EDC)
03/09/22	(S)	EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205
03/09/22	(S)	Heard & Held
03/09/22	(S)	MINUTE(EDC)
03/14/22	(S)	EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205

03/14/22	(S)	Heard & Held
03/14/22	(S)	MINUTE (EDC)
03/16/22	(S)	EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205
03/16/22	(S)	Heard & Held
03/16/22	(S)	MINUTE (EDC)
03/18/22	(S)	EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205
03/18/22	(S)	Heard & Held
03/18/22	(S)	MINUTE (EDC)
03/23/22	(S)	EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205

**WITNESS REGISTER**

STACY BARNES, Director  
 Government Relations and Public Affairs  
 Alaska Housing Finance Corporation  
 Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified by invitation on SB 225 and answered questions.

REGAN MATTINGLY, Planner  
 Alaska Housing Finance Corporation  
 Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions on SB 225.

STEVE ATWATER, Contractor  
 Alaska Statewide Mentor Project  
 University of Alaska  
 Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented Helping to Retain Alaska's Early Career Teachers Since 2004 and answered questions on SB 225.

GLENDA FINDLAY, Director  
 K-12 Outreach  
 University of Alaska Fairbanks  
 Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions on SB 225.

SONDRA MEREDITH, Teacher Certification Administrator  
 Division for Innovation and Education Excellence  
 Department of Education and Early Development  
 Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions on SB 225.

AMY VINLOVE, Director  
 School of Education  
 University of Alaska Fairbanks  
 Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions on SB 225.

KELLY MANNING, Deputy Director  
Division for Innovation and Education Excellence  
Department of Education and Early Development  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions on SB 225.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

[9:04:18 AM](#)

**CHAIR ROGER HOLLAND** called the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Stevens, Begich, Hughes and Chair Holland. Senator Micciche arrived shortly thereafter.

**SB 225-TEACHER REGISTERED APPRENTICE PROGRAMS**

[9:04:52 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."

[9:05:47 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND asked Ms. Barnes to discuss the teacher housing program the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation offers.

[9:06:02 AM](#)

STACY BARNES, Director, Government Relations and Public Affairs, Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, Anchorage, Alaska, said the Teacher Health Professional and Public Safety Housing Program was one that the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC) continues to be excited about. It was founded in 2004 when former CEO Dan Fauske had a personal experience in Barrow. He recognized that teachers had difficulty finding safe, quality, and secure housing in rural communities. The housing program was born through his business acumen and recognition of a statewide need. Initially, it started as a program for teachers. Five hundred units have been developed since 2004 under the program. The program was designed to create new construction and restore existing units. As projects developed, communities began identifying needs and working on project plans, often in conjunction with local health professionals and public safety

officers. AHFC requires developments to meet a minimum five-star efficiency rating. Funding comes from a variety of sources and local communities often contribute land to the project. Financing may come from traditional loans or grants from the Rasmussen Foundation or the Denali Commission. AHFC provides gap financing to help projects across the state because building homes in communities where the populations are 6,500 or less on the road system or 600 or less off the road system sometimes requires additional financial expertise.

MS. BARNES said Regan Mattingly and the planning department provide counseling and support to communities so they can be successful in their quest to build community housing for professionals. AHFC comes before the legislature and requests funds through the capital budget process. Most often AHFC's dividend sources the funds. The funds contribute to the project after the capital budget is signed. AHFC then goes through a competitive public process where applicants are invited to apply for the program. Funding awards and announcements are generally made in October, allowing construction to start as early as the following spring or summer. Senator Murkowski provided a \$2 million earmark for the program this year through the omnibus package that was signed into law. AHFC asked the legislature for additional funds so the federal funds could be received and put towards the program.

[9:07:27 AM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE arrived.

[9:09:48 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS asked how the properties are disposed.

[9:10:11 AM](#)

MS. BARNES deferred to Mr. Mattingly but stated a project owner presents their idea to AHFC. AHFC strictly contributes through the grant.

[9:10:37 AM](#)

REGAN MATTINGLY, Planner, Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, Anchorage, Alaska, said the organization that applies for the grant manages the property and typically rents it to a specific profession. The program has deed restrictions. Owners must provide housing for that profession for ten years before gaining ownership without restrictions.

[9:11:24 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS asked if the grants are issued to organizations not individual teachers.

MR. MATTINGLY answered, yes.

[9:11:42 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH asked what the match was for the \$2 million that was earmarked in the federal bipartisan infrastructure bill.

[9:11:59 AM](#)

MS. BARNES responded that the program does not require a match. The AHFC dividend provides \$1.75 million, and statutory designated program receipts (SDPR) contributes an additional \$500,000 to the Governor's capital budget.

[9:12:20 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH asked if the total would be close to \$4.2 million including the additional \$2 million.

MS. BARNES replied yes, the federal omnibus appropriation provided the additional \$2 million, which was the first contribution of federal dollars since the program started in 2004.

[9:12:46 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH asked if AHFC has receipt authority for \$2 million from the federal government and what the annual request would be for the program. He said he wanted to nail down the amount because AHFC can clearly use \$4.2 million.

MS. BARNES replied that AHFC requested the receipt authority of the \$2 million but does not have it yet. She said Mr. Mattingly could discuss the program's historical and current needs.

[9:13:42 AM](#)

MR. MATTINGLY responded that AHFC receives approximately 30 registrations for the program from different organizations across the state. In the last application cycle, AHFC received ten full applications. The total amount of units for all ten applicants was 55. AHFC was able to fund four of ten applications for a total of 13 of 55 units. Need and demand exceed what the program can provide.

[9:14:48 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH noted that the need for teacher housing has been discussed in previous meetings, so the committee should identify

the annual amount necessary to fill the need. He further noted that one-fifth of the annual request was met.

SENATOR MICCICHE asked how many units AHFC would build if the funds were available, and if there was a long-term plan to meet the needs of teacher housing in rural Alaska.

[9:15:33 AM](#)

MS. BARNES said it was essential to look back at the number of applications for funding that came in. AHFC addresses housing for teachers, public safety officers and health professionals. An ideal project would be a fourplex that has two units for teachers, one for public safety, and one for a healthcare professional. The grants are competitively awarded, so AHFC might not be able to project a need across the state. However, she could provide the committee with background about the number of projects requested over the past decade that were not funded. She said it was common for a grantee to have been previously denied.

[9:16:46 AM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE said he would like a background document to understand rural housing better.

[9:16:56 AM](#)

MR. MATTINGLY stated that AHFC has a lot of anecdotal data but has not done a large teacher-specific quantitative study in the last few years. Recently, AHFC completed a study with the Department of Public Safety on the rural housing needs of state troopers. It included a survey and study. AHFC has focused on gathering more data and information regarding the various professional groups at different times. The most recent study was on harm and the public safety of troopers.

[9:17:56 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES asked if it was within the purview of AHFC to make a projection of the unmet expected housing needs for health professionals, teachers, and troopers over the next five to ten years and present it to the legislature.

[9:18:45 AM](#)

MS. BARNES replied that the Department of Public Safety and the governor's office requested the study Mr. Mattingly mentioned. AHFC can make the report available to the committee and would be happy to discuss a study with the Department of Education.

[9:19:08 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH said the committee needs to know whether the issue was more resources or more qualified grant applications. He asked if AHFC presently has enough resources to fund the eligible applications.

[9:20:05 AM](#)

MS. BARNES stated the maximum grant amount awarded any project was \$500,000. The limit allows AHFC to contribute funding to more than one community. The number of dollars coming in represents the number of grants that can be given each year. Mr. Mattingly could address application deficiencies that have occurred in the recent past. Also, counseling was available to agencies to help them achieve project funding. In FY 2022, AHFC received ten applications and funded four. She asked Mr. Mattingly to provide additional details.

[9:21:08 AM](#)

MR. MATTINGLY said nine out of ten applications met the threshold for participation in the program. Once an application met the minimum threshold, it was ranked according to a scoring criterion. The applications with the highest score and community need are selected first. AHFC could have awarded more projects if there had been more resources.

SENATOR BEGICH thanked Mr. Mattingly for the answer.

[9:22:22 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS said AHFC has done a tremendous job providing 500 rural housing units for teachers, police, and health professionals, but there was still an enormous need. He opined that based on testimonies given at committee meetings, a long-term plan was needed to solve the problem. He asked who could take charge of a study to determine needs and develop a long-term funding plan.

MS. BARNES said AHFC would be happy to work with the Department of Education on a rural housing study. Both Dan Fauske, former CEO, and Brian Butcher, AHFC's current CEO, speak very articulately about various challenges resulting from the housing shortage. For instance, a teacher might accept a job in a rural community and find out the classroom was their bedroom. Teachers living in substandard housing situations do not stay very long, which is a detriment to the students and community. AHFC takes the housing shortage seriously because the 500 housing units that have been built improved children's lives due to stability from having teachers, public safety, and health professionals in a community for multiple years. These positions are critical

assets that provide expertise and build relationships with families in the community.

[9:24:44 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS thanked AHFC for its work and suggested the legislature encourage the administration to move a housing study forward so AHFC can meet the housing needs. Five hundred housing units are wonderful, but 2000 units would be more reasonable.

[9:25:04 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND asked who owns the 500 housing units.

[9:25:25 AM](#)

MS. BARNES said the ownership of each project depends on the individual who comes forward with the project. In most cases local school districts are the owners.

[9:25:53 AM](#)

MR. MATTINGLY said ninety-five percent of program housing grants were awarded to school districts, community health centers, nonprofit organizations, or tribal governments. They own the project and must meet the deed requirements.

[9:26:33 AM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE asked what construction methods were used to build the houses and if an evaluation was done to determine the most cost-effective way to provide additional housing.

CHAIR HOLLAND asked if funds are released to the owner to plan construction.

[9:27:20 AM](#)

MS. BARNES answered that AHFC looks at the total cost of the development and building requirements, such as minimum energy efficiency standards. AHFC appreciates low-cost units that meet minimum quality standards to achieve the right balance for the community. AHFC does not provide either materials or shipping. It is up to the local project sponsor to develop a project that is in the community's best interest.

[9:28:11 AM](#)

MR. MATTINGLY responded that AHFC scores projects based on lower total development costs. A project with a more economically competitive balance sheet will receive higher points and higher priority.

[9:28:55 AM](#)

At ease.

[9:32:38 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND reconvened the meeting.

[9:33:13 AM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE asked Ms. Barnes to explain what happens after a project is built because the committee would like to know: who collects the rent, whether the grant was considered a loan, and whether the rent that is collected would help fund a future project.

CHAIR HOLLAND asked if the award was considered a loan and if rent from a project helps fund a future project.

[9:34:00 AM](#)

MS. BARNES said AHFC's participation in the Teacher, Health Professional, and Public Safety Housing program provides up to \$500,000 in the form of a grant to the project sponsor. The project sponsor owns the development and is responsible for collecting rent and paying loans. In most cases, a school district owns the project, and teachers pay rent to the school district.

[9:34:45 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH asked Ms. Barnes to provide the cost of the Public Safety housing study along with the report, so the committee has an idea of what a housing study costs.

[9:35:14 AM](#)

MS. BARNES replied that AHFC interviewed state troopers to understand their housing needs. For example, how many rooms they would need for their families. The work was done entirely through AHFC. She expressed her belief that there was no cost associated with the study outside the normal business operations of AHFC. However, she would confirm this.

[9:36:02 AM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE asked whether the program has the potential to be perpetual in that once a school district sets aside maintenance costs, net proceeds could go to the next project, or if net profits would stay with the district to offset other costs.

[9:36:46 AM](#)

MS. BARNES answered that it was unlikely that there would be any profits remaining to return to AHFC after the operation and maintenance costs associated with property ownership were paid.

However, he said it was an interesting idea that could be investigated.

[9:37:18 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES asked whether project owners typically finance an amount equal to the \$500,000 grant and whether the rent collected pays off the project's loans.

[9:37:54 AM](#)

MS. BARNES replied that from FY 2020 through FY 2022, most of the housing projects AHFC awarded were duplexes or triplexes. Although, there were some outliers in FY 2020, including Nome that built 18 units and received a \$500,000 grant from AHFC. She asked Mr. Mattingly to offer more details.

[9:38:29 AM](#)

MR. MATTINGLY said that every project has been different. AHFC could contribute up to \$500,000 depending on a project's budget, and a minimum 15 percent match was required. The average match over the program's lifetime has been about 37.5 percent, which means many projects would not have been built with the gap funding provided by AHFC. The program also has an underwriting process based on an organization's financials. AHFC gives part of the award as a grant and part as a loan based on an underwriting calculation. A rent versus cost calculation ensures the organization can afford the loan portion of an award, and repayment of the loan helps fund future projects.

[9:40:40 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS stated that some districts charge teachers minimal to no rent as the cost of doing business to get someone to live in a small village. Rural districts must pay teachers for the teachers to pay the rent. He opined that the committee needs to hear the department's recommendations.

[9:41:05 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND asked Mr. Atwater to begin discussion on a statewide mentorship program.

[9:42:17 AM](#)

STEVE ATWATER, Contractor, Alaska Statewide Mentor Project, Anchorage, Alaska, stated he began working in October to help the Alaska Statewide Mentor Project (ASMP) be included in state-level policy. SB 225 would be an excellent way to achieve this. Ms. Findlay has been with ASMP and the K-12 Outreach office for ten years and has a deep knowledge of the project's operations. He said his presentation includes: an overview of ASMP, project

funding, comments and suggestions, and a strategy for including ASMP in SB 225 to retain teachers.

[9:43:37 AM](#)

MR. ATWATER moved to slide 3, Alaska Statewide Mentor Project: What Is It? He read from a script and emphasized the following points:

[Original punctuation provided.]

ASMP has been in existence since 2004 and during this time has been continually improved. When former Governor Murkowski and former Commissioner Sampson started ASMP I was a superintendent in a small rural district that had limited to no capacity to mentor its early career teachers. ASMP then, was a previously unknown benefit.

It is important to note that the mentors are full time release- they do not have other commitments. This is significant when compared to in-district mentors who often have regular teaching duties in addition to mentoring a new hire.

The mentoring model developed by the New Teacher Center that ASMP follows is research based. ASMP continually modifies it to meet the unique needs of the Alaska context. As you know, adjusting to and then incorporating the local context into instruction can be difficult for teachers who are new to our state- the mentors help with this.

[9:44:54 AM](#)

MR. ATWATER advanced to slide 4, Who Are the Mentors, and continued reading:

[Original punctuation provided.]

The mentors are all experienced master teachers but are not eligible to mentor until they have completed extensive training in how to mentor. I note in the slide that having a lot of teaching experience does not automatically equate to being a good mentor- it takes training. I also want to stress that the selection process for the mentors is rigorous. Our mentors support the mentees virtually and in person- I

am pleased to share that the mentors are again traveling to schools now that COVID has waned a bit.

[9:45:39 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND asked how many teachers one full-time release mentor assists.

MR. ATWATER deferred to MS. Findlay.

MS. FINDLAY replied that the mentor-to-mentee ratio was 1:15.

[9:46:05 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES asked how many mentors are employed in a typical school year.

MR. ATWATER responded that the next slide would address the question.

[9:46:16 AM](#)

MR. ATWATER turned to slide 5, ASMP Supporting Some of Alaska's Early Career Teachers, and continued reading his script:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Here are some numbers to allow you to gain a sense of the scale of ASMP in Alaska.

Note that the state discontinued its fiscal support for ASMP in 2015. You can see the total numbers of ECTs served begin to decrease after this.

The table on the right shows you the percentage of Alaska's ECTs that receive ASMP support. Obviously, it would be good to increase this percentage. And so, while the project does excellent work, it unfortunately, due to fiscal constraints, only serves a small portion of the state's early career teachers.

[9:47:05 AM](#)

MR. ATWATER moved to slide 6, How Is ASMP Funded, and continued reading:

[Original punctuation provided.]

This slide summarizes how ASMP is funded. I want to note that former UA President Johnsen first included UA funds for ASMP and now UA President Pitney is doing the same. While ASMP is not a university function per

se, the two presidents recognize its importance to UA, K-12 and Alaska, so both deserve thanks for this support during tight fiscal times.

The recently received federal grant will begin to support additional mentors beginning in August. The grant will focus on supporting ECTs in high-need rural remote schools and will at its height, increase the served ECT percentage above 40 percent.

[9:47:57 AM](#)

MR. ATWATER moved to slide 7, ASMP Making a Difference, and continued reading:

[Original punctuation provided.]

With regard to whether ASMP makes a difference, we have research that found there is a positive correlation between ASMP mentoring and student outcomes as well as teacher retention. The first two bullets of this slide summarize this.

Each year ASMP surveys its various stakeholders including the ECTs. The responses on the survey are positive and ECTs regularly state that ASMP played a big role in helping them have a successful first two years of teaching.

MR. ATWATER added that having an early positive teaching experience was critical to retention. More than one-third of teachers leave during the first five years of being in the profession.

[9:48:39 AM](#)

MR. ATWATER turned to slide 8, SB 225 and Teacher Retention, and continued reading:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Next, I want to move to SB 225, thank you for introducing this bill. As you know districts are having a difficult time hiring enough teachers. I have been involved with most of the conversations that are a part of the bill, so it is good to see them being brought forward in this way.

But as you know, the effect of the proposed changes will not be realized for a while. It is for this reason that I encourage you to add a section to the bill that supports teacher retention. It is critical that the state work to slow the churn of its teachers. I know that UA is working hard to recruit more students to its teacher preparation programs and districts are more and more adept at recruiting teachers from out of state or even from over-seas. In spite of these efforts, there is a teaching shortage in Alaska today and there will be one in August when schools open after the summer break. It makes sense then, to support teacher retention. We believe that ASMP is an excellent strategy that should be included in SB 225 to help with teacher retention.

MR. ATWATER said that the retirement board has indicated that about 300 Tier II teachers are retiring each year, making teacher recruitment an ongoing challenge.

[9:49:59 AM](#)

MR. ATWATER advanced to slide 9, Increasing Teacher Retention: A Two-Pronged Approach, and continued reading:

When you look at retention strategies, you can broadly place them in two categories: those that are extrinsic motivators to help teachers stay in the profession and those that are intrinsic motivators.

Last week you heard examples of extrinsic motivators for teacher retention, the longevity bonus offered by the Bering Strait School District is an example of this. These extrinsic strategies are good, but in my opinion, they are not enough. I am convinced that while the extrinsic motivators are important, a teacher must ultimately feel successful, must feel that their teaching is making a difference to be intrinsically motivated to continue in the profession. It is thus important when considering retention that attention is given to strategies that directly support a teacher's instruction and ultimately student learning. This support also helps the teacher foster relationships with students and the community that are so critical. When the intrinsic motivation to teach is high, some of the extrinsic variables that drive teachers from the profession may become less significant.

[9:51:05 AM](#)

MR. ATWATER moved to slide 10, A Solution Is to Have ASMP Support Teacher Retention. He stated this was a proposal from MS. Findlay and himself. He continued reading:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Increasing the number of ASMP mentors supporting our states ECTs is an intrinsic strategy for improving teacher retention. I do not know what percent of turnover makes sense- I offer 15% here as a starting point. I know our remote districts often have turnover rates that are 20-30%. Offering ASMP mentors to support these districts' new hires will help to lower this number.

As mentioned, ASMP has a long history and a strong operations unit at the K-12 Outreach Office. The K-12 Outreach Office has the capacity to expand and the underlying foundation of UAF to support it. One other note of interest is that ASMP at times helps with recruiting teachers.

MR. ATWATER said that offering mentoring when recruiting early career teachers was another advantage of the program. The prospect of a mentor might entice a teacher from Ohio to work in Shishmaref.

Each year, ASMP takes a hard look at itself through analyzing feedback from its stakeholders and through careful accounting of its activity. The project has developed an on-line portal to help track its activity to facilitate this analysis. I mention this because offering an annual report to your or DEED on the use of state funds for this purpose would not be a heavy lift for the office.

[9:52:44 AM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE said that a study by the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) reported Alaska averages a 21 percent teacher turnover rate. He asked Mr. Atwater why he chose a cut-off of 15 percent when Alaska's average was 21 percent. He was trying to visualize communities with a 15 percent or greater teacher turnover rate.

[9:53:14 AM](#)

MR. ATWATER replied that Kenai, Anchorage, and Mat-Su, have about a ten percent turnover rate. Generally, the more remote the area, the higher the turnover rate. A study by Education Northwest showed that remote schools often experience 20 - 30 percent teacher turnover. He stated that 15 percent was selected to initiate the conversation.

[9:53:58 AM](#)

MR. ATWATER moved to slide 11, A solution is to Have ASMP Support Teacher Retention, and continued reading:

[Original punctuation provided.]

In closing, thank you for the opportunity to present to you this morning and thank you for bringing forward SB 225. We encourage you to consider adding a new section to the bill that will support school district retention efforts and in particular promote ASMP as a way to help with this.

The ASMP website URL and our contact information are on this slide, please don't hesitate to let us know if we can offer any additional information. Also, the last slide in your packet lists the references for the presentation.

[9:54:52 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES asked Mr. Atwater if he said one-third of teachers leave the profession within their first five years and how that compares with other professions, because that was a big exit number.

[9:55:17 AM](#)

MR. ATWATER replied that one-third was a national figure; he does not know the statistic for Alaska but could provide it to the committee. The number of teachers exiting the profession was far higher than other professions.

SENATOR HUGHES replied that the national exit statistic would explain part of Alaska's recruitment problem.

MR. ATWATER agreed and said that was why a teacher's early experience was so critical. Alaska imports many of its teachers and the context they found themselves in was daunting and unfamiliar. The extra support that ASMP provides helps new teachers experience success.

[9:56:03 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND thanked Mr. Atwater for his input on teacher retention. He said there are various teacher retention bills making their way through the legislative process, and the committee will review the mentor program and see if it would be appropriate for SB 225.

[9:56:30 AM](#)

At ease.

[9:56:41 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND reconvened the meeting.

[9:56:47 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS said Mr. Atwater was a superintendent in his district for a long time and noted that Alaska has also been losing principals and superintendents. He asked whether there was a plan for mentoring principals and superintendents.

[9:57:20 AM](#)

MR. ATWATER stated the Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA) has a mentoring program for principals and superintendents. ASMP was strictly for teachers. There are efforts to support principals and superintendents that he suggested Dr. Parady could discuss. Principals and superintendents are critical for Alaska's schools and are decreasing at unfortunate rates.

[9:57:57 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS suggested that the committee include principals and superintendents if the hearings on mentoring programs continue.

[9:58:05 AM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE shared an anecdotal experience of bringing nonresidents to the Kenai - Soldotna area to work for a large organization. He assumed Mr. Atwater had similar experiences when working as a superintendent. The organization began doing exit surveys to determine why employees were leaving and began training and hiring locals instead. He wondered how to recruit local youth and retain local teachers. He asked what types of processes ASMP has in place to help determine better recruitment and retention outcomes.

[9:59:47 AM](#)

MR. ATWATER replied that he does not know what ASMP does concerning exit interviews, but school districts conduct them.

He deferred to Ms. Findlay regarding reasons why ECTs decide to leave the profession.

[10:00:03 AM](#)

MS. FINDLAY replied that ASMP only has basic information about retention. Employees send out retention postcards and try to figure out whether the teacher remained in the state; most teachers exiting the state wanted to be near family or felt isolated.

[10:00:27 AM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE asked if there was a significant differential between local and out-of-state teachers' reasons for exiting.

MR. ATWATER replied absolutely.

[10:00:42 AM](#)

MS. FINDLAY responded that ASMP mainly surveys teachers when they exit. Local teachers stay, so they are not questioned.

[10:01:00 AM](#)

MR. ATWATER said the percentage of teachers in Alaska prepared by the University of Alaska was about 43 percent. He opined that teachers trained out-of-state come in unprepared for life in rural Alaska. Therefore, Alaska needs more teachers prepared in-state; SB 225 would help achieve this. Various efforts, including Educators Rising, also help increase the numbers. The teaching profession lacks the allure of other occupations. Everything the state could do to help improve its social status was needed. He said parents boast about their children entering various professions but never teaching. He opined that being a teacher was the most crucial profession society has and that more should be done to grow teachers locally. Although SB 225 was designed to grease the wheels to move pathways forward, and the university was working hard to bring students into the education profession, people are not knocking down doors to enter the program. Society needs to help promote the profession.

[10:02:57 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND stated that the committee would discuss the ideas of a four-day workweek and special education certification flexibility. He said some school districts want to change to a four-day workweek. The districts were told this would be complicated and require changing the school year to be counted by hours instead of days. He asked if this understanding was correct.

[10:04:12 AM](#)

SONDRA MEREDITH, Teacher Certification Administrator, Division for Innovation and Education Excellence, Department of Education and Early Development, Juneau, Alaska, replied that there are complications with changing to a four-day workweek, but it was not her area of expertise. However, there are department employees who work on school calendars and waivers that could be brought in to discuss the complications. She opined that the committee should consult teacher retirement and benefits regarding changes to the four-day workweek as it could affect a teacher's retirement benefit.

[10:05:01 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND asked Ms. Meredith to speak on special education (SpEd) certification flexibility.

[10:05:11 AM](#)

MS. MEREDITH said the department recently adjusted regulations concerning SpEd waivers or alternate paths to SpEd certificates that emulate the statute of the proof of program enrollment or subject matter expert certification. She opined that the change would alleviate district issues and allow more individuals to work in SpEd. Also, there were issues with some types of programs individuals completed out-of-state. Therefore, the department made regulatory changes to make it easier for individuals to continue using out-of-state SpEd endorsements in-state as they move to professional licensure.

[10:06:42 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES stated that the difference between a student and a resident teacher was that a student teacher stays at a school for the hours necessary to complete the university's student teaching requirement. In contrast, a teacher resident would be more like a full-time staff member and participate in teaching, school meetings, and other activities. She asked if the department would consider reducing the coursework required to obtain a bachelor's degree if a year-long compensated residency program were instituted in place of student teaching.

[10:08:29 AM](#)

MS. MEREDITH replied that it was outside the department's purview to decide the nature of the coursework required for those obtaining a bachelor's degree. That would be a function of the university system. She deferred the question to Ms. Vinlove.

[10:09:09 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES said she was describing a partnership between a university and either the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) or a school district where a student could receive workplace credit that would apply to a bachelor's degree in education. For example, Alaska Pacific University offers credit for learning in the workplace. She wondered whether credit could be awarded to streamline the process and make becoming a teacher more appealing. Superintendents reported partnering with a university outside of Alaska because the students coming to work in their districts would be teacher residents that function more like staff than students. She asked whether the University of Alaska could work with school districts or the department to award course credit for workplace learning.

[10:11:08 AM](#)

MS. MEREDITH replied that the department would be excited to partner and make seamless pathways. Still, there are guardrails for keeping the university on track when making accommodations, which Ms. Vinlove could discuss.

[10:11:58 AM](#)

AMY VINLOVE, Director, School of Education, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Fairbanks, Alaska, said she also serves as the Alaska College of Education Consortium Chair. She explained that the university has existing internship structures that model what SB 225 seeks to achieve. The university has intern teachers who spend an entire academic year in a classroom and then graduate with their licensure at the end of the year. That internship year is a carefully curated set of integrated experiences between the coursework requirements of the university and field-based practical experience. For example, in a methodology class on learning how to teach elementary math methods, a university course typically would require 45 hours of face-to-face instruction to count as a three-credit class. However, during an internship year, students only received 24 hours of face-to-face instruction. The rest of the time is spent in the classroom applying and using information gained from their coursework. It is a real-world experience. The entire internship year is integrated between time in the classroom practicing under the supervision of a mentor teacher and studying the critical science of teaching and learning preparation materials. She said the university supports SB 225 because it institutionalizes that high-quality pathway to preparation the University of Alaska offers.

[10:14:12 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES said it sounds like university course time could be reduced by a hands-on residency program.

[10:14:32 AM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE said the retention rate of homegrown teachers, as reported by Mr. Atwater, was significantly higher than imported teachers. The average turnover cost per teacher was \$20,431 a year, which costs school districts \$20 million per year. The state is responsible for the lion's share of education costs, which is not necessarily reflected in the cost of turnover. The state participates in the Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana and Idaho (WWAMI) program to help grow the number of physicians in Alaska. He asked whether Alaska needs to consider a program that would entice young people to become teachers. Although he does not generally support loan forgiveness programs, the University of Alaska only produces 200 teachers yearly, which does not fill the gap. He asked if something could be done to significantly increase the number of homegrown teachers, such as a subsidy. A subsidy would reduce the overall cost to the state because it would be a fraction of the amount the state loses due to retention issues.

[10:16:45 AM](#)

MS. VINLOVE opined that SB 225 supports two currently identified barriers to developing a diversified homegrown workforce for Alaska's schools, funding, and the need for deep district and university collaborations. Designating teaching as an apprenticeship or profession will open access to federal Department of Labor funding and many other sources, which could help reduce the cost of becoming a teacher. The designation would also allow funds to be contributed to a braided funding approach to support pre-service teacher expenses, not just for tuition and fees, but also to cover living costs during the apprenticeship or internship year. The apprenticeship model also requires a very close alignment between coursework and field-based experiences and requires the University of Alaska teacher preparation programs to develop and nurture mutually beneficial partnerships with interested K-12 districts. She stressed that the University of Alaska was eager and willing to do the work necessary to develop partnerships.

[10:18:04 AM](#)

MS. MEREDITH said there were statistics on the efficacy of the teacher education loan program that was discontinued several years ago and its ability to bring more local teachers into the profession. There was also an innovative program for Alaska's healthcare providers. It was not an education loan, but once an

individual enters a healthcare profession it offers support with loan repayment. She said committee members were given information about the programs which could be beneficial as SB 225 moves forward.

[10:19:06 AM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE he would like to learn from the past and asked that Ms. Meredith provide loan information to the committee. Although he understands the benefits of SB 225, he wonders if it would resolve the issue. He opined that if the teacher education loan program was terminated, there was likely a reason.

[10:19:40 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS stated his belief that Ms. Vinlove was responsible for UAA's School of Education, and that Fairbanks and Juneau were assisting with its accreditation situation. He asked whether the solution was working and sustainable and if she was comfortable delivering teacher education opportunities in Fairbanks and Anchorage.

[10:20:17 AM](#)

MS. VINLOVE stated that following the loss of accreditation for initial licensure programs, UAA only offers programs that lead to advanced licensures, such as a second endorsement or certification. The University of Alaska Fairbanks offers initial licensure programs in Anchorage with full-time UAF faculty and advisors. UAF has interns placed across the Southcentral region. She opined that the biggest hurdle has been communicating to the public the availability to pursue education through the various pathways. The university has been addressing the issue through its Teach Alaska website. The website clarifies that: an individual can enter the University of Alaska's initial licensure programs from anywhere in Alaska, programs are site-based, and fieldwork can be done in place. She spoke with UAA Chancellor Parnell about the future of its initial licensure programs, and it will be a long process to regain full accreditation for the initial licensure program. UAA and UAF are separately accredited institutions. UAF offers initial licensure under the accreditation it holds. The University of Alaska Southeast also offers initial licensure programs to students in the Southcentral region.

[10:22:24 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS thanked Ms. Vinlove for stepping up to fill the gap.

[10:22:31 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES thanked Ms. Vinlove for chairing the consortium. She said she had a candid conversation with superintendents a year or two ago. They mentioned that new teacher hires who graduated from UAF did not need extra coaching, unlike UAA and UAS graduates. She asked Ms. Vinlove if, through the consortium, she had noticed UAA and UAS becoming on par with UAF.

MS. VINLOVE replied that the opportunity for the universities to collaborate through the consortium model since July has been beneficial. It has provided opportunities to meet regularly and share ideas across programs. Each campus must meet the same rigorous accreditation standards, so sharing tools and strategies lifts the university system.

SENATOR HUGHES said one superintendent brought up the difference in the graduates teaching ability and several other superintendents agreed. She suggested Ms. Vinlove check in with superintendents periodically to see if they notice a change.

[10:26:27 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH asked Ms. Manning to provide the committee data points on the previously mentioned loan forgiveness program.

[10:26:43 AM](#)

KELLY MANNING, Deputy Director, Division for Innovation and Education Excellence, Department of Education and Early Development, Juneau, Alaska, replied that the information would be provided to the committee.

[10:27:21 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND held SB 225 in committee.

[10:27:32 AM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Holland adjourned the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting at 10:27 p.m.