

SCOMM

125:9

**Statewide Teleconference
Expected Participants**

Legislators:

Rep. John Coghill, Jr.
Rep. Lesil McGuire

Education Organizations (invited):

NEA - Alaska
Alaska Association of School Boards
Alaska Council of School Administrators (see written testimony)
Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals
Alaska Teacher Placement
University of Alaska Teacher Education Students

Others:

Katherine Bouta, high school English teacher from Fairbanks (see written testimony)

Invitations Issued:

Notices were sent out to all Legislative Information Offices and distributed to the members of the above organizations.

An invitation was also issued to the Department of Education, Division of Teaching and Learning Support to discuss their work and difficulties with identifying areas of teacher shortage. Cyndy Curran explained to committee staff that the division had promulgated regulations to waive certification fees for teachers hired to teach in a content shortage area. However, the Department of Law disallowed the regulation, determining the department did not have the authority or ability to define teaching shortage areas. Ms. Curran explained that the division's data collection in this area is not very good because they do not have enough staff to effectively identify the problems in each district. They are currently working to see how best to address that.

A three-minute limit is in place for each person who wishes to testify.

It is hoped that education professionals and members of the general public will take the opportunity to testify. However, specific names were not available when the committee packets were sent out.

Scheduled Participants

Subject: For Rep. Bunde

Date: Tue, 23 Oct 2001 15:03:38 -0800

From: Representative Con Bunde <Representative_Con_Bunde@legis.state.ak.us>

Organization: Alaska State Legislature

To: Barbara Norrell <Barbara_Norrell@legis.state.ak.us>

Barbara:

Please make sure Con has the following information to read at tonight's hearing.

Thanks!

Karen

Con -- Please add the following to your usual Reminders speech at tonight's Statewide Teleconference. You can read it at the beginning and near to 7:30 also:

If we run out of time before we are able to hear from you, you may send written comments to the committee. I will make sure that they are entered into the record and that all members of the committee get a copy.

- You may either fax them to my office at 907-465-3871 or
- Give them to your local Legislative Information Office, who will forward them to me, or
- You may e-mail them to me at
Representative_Con_Bunde@legis.state.ak.us

Con -- Do read your address with "underline" between your title and your names.



Alaska Association of Elementary School Principals
Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals
Alaska Association of School Administrators
Alaska Association of School Business Officials
Sponsor of the Alaska Staff Development Network

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Alaska Council of School Administrators

Date: October 12, 2001
To: Representative Con Bunde
From: *PH* Darroll Hargraves, Executive Director
Subject: Teacher Shortage Hearings

I want to express my appreciation for the hearings that you are having around the state. Many teachers and administrators have been feeling for several years that the teacher shortage has reached a critical level in Alaska.

Rather than remake the case here I am attaching several editorials that make the case for the fact that there is a shortage, and that there is a need for staff development for teachers and administrators.

I look forward to talking with you on October 23.



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Where are the Teachers? We Need a more powerful Magnet! by Darroll Hargraves, Executive Director

What's the problem? What's getting the attention?

Interesting isn't it? During the past few years, public attention has been focused on funding, construction, standards, and testing. Each of these issues is important. However, whenever superintendents get together to talk about immediate and future concerns, another issue tops the agenda - the need to recruit, hire, and keep certified and qualified teachers and administrators.

The recent announcement by the University of Alaska that a five year program will be required for certification will further reduce the number of Alaskans to fill positions in our schools.

Alaska is not alone. In fact, teacher shortages are entering a critical stage across the nation. U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley consistently expresses a concern about the ability of our schools to attract the very brightest and best into education careers. As student enrollments continue to climb nationally, demand is outstripping supply at a time when the hurdles are being lifted even higher. For example, the shortage is becoming even more acute because many states are increasing their standards for teachers and some are requiring them to have majors in the subjects they teach or to pass qualifying tests. The recent announcement by the University of Alaska that a five-year program will be required for certification will further reduce the number of Alaskans to fill positions in our schools.

Salaries have not kept pace with what talented people can make outside the classroom. A recent Quality Counts 2000, 50state survey, conducted by Education Week, found that one in five college graduates who began teaching in 1993-94 left within three years. The brightest novice teachers, as measured by their college-entrance exams, were the most likely to leave, the study revealed.

There was a time, not so long ago, when Alaska was a magnet for educators.

What's at stake here? The immediate concern for many educators is having excellent teachers in the classroom—preparing students to pass exit exams that are looming in their future. Even more importantly, they are concerned about preparing students for life in the 21st century.

There was a time, not so long ago, when Alaska was a magnet for educators. Our salaries were the highest in the nation. Our recruiters could promise adventure,



Voters can expect to vote on a general obligation bond package that will fund schools and some of the state's deferred maintenance backlog.

good hunting and fishing, and a lifestyle that attracted exceptional talent. Let's face it. What worked in the past is not getting us the number and level of certified, qualified educators we need today and will need in the future.

While average teacher salaries in Alaska are still above the national average, we are now caught in what the New York Times calls a bidding war. That war has spread from coast to coast, and we are not winning. In fact, we are being out-manuevered as never before. Take, for example, the incentives being offered in several states. California is offering \$10,000 interest-free loans for buying a home, \$30,000 bonuses for attaining advanced certification, and \$11,000 to repay college loans. In Texas, \$2,000 signing bonuses are becoming commonplace. Southern states such as Florida, Georgia and Mississippi have districts paying bonuses of up to \$6,000 to retain quality teachers.

As crises show signs of becoming catastrophes, some state legislatures and state departments of education have gotten the ball rolling on bringing retired teachers and administrators back into the system. Those early retirement incentives that were sold, in some case, as a way to remove the "dead wood" are now looking more like they've caused a "brain drain."

Salaries are a major problem, both for teachers and administrators. Alaska's largest districts provide an example of how noncompetitive our salaries are. These districts have budgets, enrollments, numbers of employees, physical plants, and demands comparable to large districts outside the state that are paying their superintendents nearly double. In fact, an Alaska board member recently admitted to the media that their superintendent is underpaid and speculated that if the present superintendent left and had to be replaced, it would require an additional \$50,000. Even that level of an increase would be low compared to salaries paid in comparable districts outside.

Granted, we need to pay attention to standards, facilities, and a number of other critical issues. At the same time, let's not forget that our ability to attract and keep outstanding teachers and administrators is basic to everything we hope to accomplish. Alaska needs a constant flow of quality, certifiable educators. While the problem may not be completely solved during this session of the Legislature, we simply must make sure that it receives the attention it deserves. The future of our kids depends on it.



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Leadership Tools for Quality Schools by Darroll Hargraves, Executive Director

When the advisory group for the Alaska Staff Development Network set goals for this year the priorities were:

Expansion of comprehensive training efforts focusing on systemic change and implementation of standards-based education system,

Comprehensive instructional leadership training for principals,

Training in educational applications of technology to help educators enable students to meet Alaska content and performance standards.

A few months ago the Gates Foundation announced that they are making funding available based upon the number of principals and superintendents in private and public schools in each state. The superintendents and the two principals associations in Alaska have joined together with the Alaska Staff Development Network to apply for this grant. This is a unique opportunity for school administrators to establish the needs of administrators and develop a program that will focus on meeting those identified needs.

Superintendents and principals in the state recently received and responded to a survey sent to them by the design team in an attempt to more closely identify the needs that will be addressed by the Gates Proposal. Over 35% of the survey forms were completed and returned. The possibility that a program will be designed which will deal with the needs identified by administrators is an exciting development.

The Alaska Leadership Tools for Quality Schools Program will be administered by the Alaska Council of School Administrators in partnership with project partner organizations. The project will be governed by a Steering Committee composed of key representatives of project partner organizations:

- Ray Barnhardt, University of Alaska Fairbanks/Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative
- Bob Blum, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
- Keith Brosz, Alaska Private Schools Administrators
- Darroll Hargraves, Alaska Assoc. of School Administrators/Alaska Council of School Administrators
- Jack Heesch, Alaska Human Resource Investment Council, Office of the Governor
- Frank Hill, Alaska Federation of Natives/Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative/ Native Administrators for Rural Alaska
- Mary Johnstone, Alaska Association of Elementary School Principals
- Carol Kane, Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals



- Vernon Marshall, NEA-Alaska
- Doug North, Alaska Pacific University
- Carl Rose, Association of Alaska School Boards
- John Rusyniak, Alaska Society for Technology in Education
- Al Smith, University of Washington
- Mark Standley, Apple Computer, Inc.
- Kelly Tonsmeire, Alaska Staff Development Network

Superintendents and principals can be appreciative of the work this group is doing to design a quality leadership program for working school administrators.

Let's Attract the Brightest and Best into Education Careers

THE APPLICANT POOL IS THINNING

By Darroll Hargraves
Executive Director, ACSA

When does a crisis become a catastrophe? It's a question we'd better start asking now. Why? Because, for communities across Alaska and our nation, the pipeline is drying up as school systems try to attract the qualified teachers and administrators they need to provide leadership for children's education in Alaska.

The sense of urgency couldn't be greater, according to "The Shrinking Applicant Pool," a commentary in the November 8, 2000, issue of *Education Week*. The author, University of Memphis professor Thomas Glass, knows his stuff. In fact, he has conducted studies of the American school superintendency for the 1990s and for the first decade of the 21st century. He did not look specifically at Alaska, but what he learned reflects the story in Alaska.

Alaska has been blessed with magnificently talented and dedicated people who have served as superintendents and principals. However, a recent study indicates that our nation's nearly 14,000 school districts will be faced with hiring 8,000 new superintendents during the first eight years of the 21st century, primarily because of retirements and people simply leaving the field. Another study revealed that 55 percent of rural, 45 percent of suburban, and 47 percent of urban school districts are currently facing a shortage of qualified candidates for the principalship. In Alaska we may see 33% of the superintendents vacate their position each year. Where does that leave us? It sets us up for a leadership gap in some of the most important public positions in our democracy.

Glass points out reasons for "thin applicant pools" which may apply to Alaska:

- strains in board-superintendent relations;
 - salary that is inadequate to cover the responsibility and risk;
 - spouses who find it difficult to move because they hold professional positions in their communities;
 - a search process that is often so public and intrusive that it can put administrators at risk in their present positions;
 - a growing tendency for superintendents and most of the rest of us to be increasingly concerned about quality of life, no matter what the salary;
 - media that are poised for attack at the drop of an application;
 - family concerns, ranging from the ability to afford quality housing to moving children at sensitive ages;
 - retirement systems that are not portable from state-to-state;
 - vacancy notices that seem to exclude new candidates, and school boards that change after a few years and want to hire "their own superintendent."
- What's at stake? The education of our children and the future of our state and nation are on the block! While it is hard to break old habits, perhaps the time has come to face some of the problems Glass has pointed out.
- What question should we be asking. I suggest we rev up discussion. How can we continue to attract the brightest and best in our society into careers in education—in this case, the superintendency?"
- I'd like to enhance Glass' suggestions with key questions that should guide us in our discussions. Here are a few:
- School systems are often the largest institution in the community, with a larger staff and budget, more extensive physical plant, and responsibility for delivering a vitally important service to hundreds or thousands of people. Are we willing to consider what the leaders of these organizations would make if they were CEOs or top managers of similar sized businesses?
 - Are we willing to offer extended contracts that will attract outstanding education leaders who would like a bit more job security?
 - Is it possible for us to realize that superintendents are overburdened by never-ending demands, that they are always on call, and that they need help to get the job done? Too often, administrators are forced to shift focus from what makes a difference in the classroom to dealing with the whim of a single-issue person with friends in high places that drives some people right out of education.
 - Can we accept the fact that anyone who is a leader of learning must also continue to learn? Too often, when educators attend a conference, someone yells, "Junket." Most people in professional life understand that travel and conferences, coupled with ongoing concern about making sure everything is moving ahead on the home front, is very hard work.
 - Can outstanding school board members convince some of their colleagues that micro-management and treating educators with only a marginal level of respect will jeopardize education for children?
 - Is it possible for administrators, teachers, school boards, and communities to work as a team on behalf of even better education for students?

These are issues each and every community must face if we hope to prepare our children for life in a new century and new millennium. When you come down to it, ensuring the best possible education for Alaska's children will ultimately be the most important thing we ever do.



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School Improvement Requires People Improvement by Darroll Hargraves, Executive Director

An event, which remains the high mark of my career as superintendent of schools, happened when I was superintendent of the Ketchikan Borough School District. We had been successfully balancing the budget with solid support of the Borough. The community and members of the board were generally positive about the improvements in curriculum and instruction. In a regular meeting of the School Board, directions were given to me to develop a plan of services for staff development with a budget of \$125,000. The board gave no other directions except that they should be given the opportunity to review the plan of services and be kept informed.

I had never seen or hear of a School Board taking the initiative for staff development in this way. The Board was committed to possibly the most important aspect of a successful school. At the time I considered the action of the Board to be progressive and sensitive to the main ingredient for implementing change.

It has been of concern that new demands for school improvement have increased, as the emphasis and funding for staff development has decreased. Staff development has been the first thing to be cut when districts are confronted with tight budgets. It takes a tough board and superintendent to commit to staff development as the last thing to cut from the budget. The larger community often proposes cutting funding for staff training. It is difficult to understand why funding for staff development is often viewed as a perk for teachers.

Staff development should be a major activity and expenditure for public schools at a time when standards, exit exams, and student security are major concerns of politicians, business leaders, and parents.

It was of interest to me a few years ago to learn that a certain oil company was spending more training the custodial staff assigned to the care and upkeep of their office building lobby than school districts were budgeting for teacher development. No successful business leader would expect to re-engineer their business without giving attention to staff development and budgeting for the cost.

It is encouraging to see the wave of staff development taking place this past summer in an attempt to train a large number of teachers and administrators to deal with the implementation of standards and the requirements of the exit exam for graduates.

The change in approach and philosophy which currently consumes so much what we do in public schools mandates a rethinking by policy makers about the emphasis to be placed on development of school personnel in Alaska's schools. Legislators, state policy makers, and local school boards need to examine their own position regarding the use of the public purse for staff development programs that are necessary for implementing the changes they have required.



Legislators, state policy makers, and local school boards need to examine their own position regarding the use of the public purse for staff development programs that are necessary for implementing the changes they have required.

Subject: Alaska Teacher Retention and Recruitment

Date: Wed, 5 Sep 2001 16:09:39 -0400

From: kbouta@northstar.k12.ak.us

To: Representative_Con_Bunde@legis.state.ak.us

FROM:

NAME: Katherine Bouta
ADDRESS: 1024 Cranberry Ridge Drive
Fairbanks, AK 99712

Representative Bunde:

I have heard you are asking for public comment in October on the issue of teacher retention and recruitment and I wanted to address the issue. The main problems in Alaska now for recruiting and retaining teachers are salary and student loads. Why should teachers stay in Alaska when they could be paid a bonus for signing a one year contract in another state and receive a higher yearly salary? While teachers do the work we do because we love it, we also believe in the American way - which stresses how much a person makes, and how well he/she can take care of his/her family.

Related to this is that as we have fewer teachers, the sizes of the classes we teach increase. I teach high school English, and now have 142 students. That means for every essay I ask for, I can expect to grade 142 papers, which equals 1136 papers in a year if I only require 4 papers a semester/8 papers a year. If I take 10 minutes a paper (minimal time) to grade each, that is 189 hours of just grading papers. That does not include any time for grading tests, in-class work, or other homework, or the time I spend teaching in the classroom. Yet, I cannot prepare my students for the High School Qualifying Exam in Reading or Writing, or meet the state educational standards if I ask any less of them. And I am not alone. I find most high school English teachers now exploring other careers, such as grant writing or administrative assistants in firms, which would pay them more, while demanding less of their time.

I realize hiring more teachers and paying our teachers better salaries is expensive. Yet we are told over and over that our children's education is a top priority and our society's most valuable asset. And most communities are hard pressed to come up with money, although that is partly because they will not raise the taxes to find the money. We need a state educational tax of \$15 each person who works in the state, and pressure needs to be brought upon communities who have no local educational tax to have one of \$10 per person living in the community. \$25 a year is a cheap way to show we value education - if our state and communities truly value education.

Sincerely,

Katherine Bouta