



Photograph by Donald Zanoff

**ALASKA
PROFESSIONAL TEACHING
PRACTICES COMMISSION**

**ANNUAL REPORT
2016**

INTRODUCTION

The Alaska State Professional Teaching Practices Commission (PTPC) submits its report for Fiscal Year 2016. This report cites the activities and services of the PTPC as authorized by Alaska Statutes, Title 14, Chapter 20, Article 5, entitled “The Professional Teaching Practices Act.” For FY 2016, the PTPC was funded through an increase in certification fees. This was per legislative intent and is in accordance with AS 14.20.500.

The Commission governs matters of ethical and professional standards of educators and their compliance with state law and contractual obligations.

This report contains a synopsis of activities of the Commission from July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016. It is prepared on behalf of the Commission by the Executive Director, James A. Seitz, and Secretary, Atiya Lawhorne.

WHAT IS THE PROFESSIONAL TEACHING PRACTICES COMMISSION?

In 1966, the education profession in the State of Alaska was granted the right and responsibility to define and to enforce ethical standards of its members. The Alaska Legislature established and empowered a nine-member Commission to impose sanctions against the certificates of educators who engaged in illegal, immoral, or unethical conduct. The *Professional Teaching Practices Commission* is composed of five teachers, one superintendent, one principal, one representative of the Department of Education & Early Development, and one representative of higher education. Constituent groups nominate candidates and the governor appoints the Commissioners who are then subject to approval of the Legislature.

Commission staff investigates allegations of misconduct and partners with Department of Law to present cases to the Commission. As a quasi-judicial body, the Commission has the power to impose sanctions against the certificates of those found, by a preponderance of the evidence, to be in violation of the Code of Ethics of the Education Profession.

The Commission has jurisdiction over all certificated members of the education profession, including administrators and instructors in higher education. The Commission's order is final in disciplinary matters regarding a teacher. Before the certificate of an administrator is sanctioned, the Commissioner of Education & Early Development must concur. A final order of the Commission may be appealed to the Superior Court.

Educators are assigned the responsibility of caring for children and are placed in a position of public trust. Education is a profession, that by its very nature, stresses the value, worth, and dignity of all individuals. Educators are tasked with developing each student's potential, and as such, act as role models for students. It is essential, therefore, that educators sustain the highest degree of ethical conduct.

In their commitment to quality education, the members of the Professional Teaching Practices Commission hold their colleagues to the higher ethical standard that is demanded of a profession entrusted with the care and teaching of children.

DISCIPLINARY ACTION

Pursuant to Alaska Statutes 14.20.470, the PTPC has the power to:

1. **Warn:** A warning stipulates that the considered conduct is unethical, and if not corrected, a more serious sanction could be imposed. A warning is private communication with the educator; however, it is a matter of public record.

2. **Reprimand.** In the event of a reprimand, members of the education community are informed of the action, and record of the sanction is placed in the certification file. A reprimand is reported to the NASDTEC Clearinghouse for national distribution.

3. **Suspend.** In the event of a suspension, members of the education community are informed of the action. A suspension may include conditions which must be met before the certificate will be reinstated. A suspension means loss of a certificate for a specific period of time. A suspension is reported to the NASDTEC Clearinghouse for national distribution.

4. **Revoke.** In the event of a revocation, members of the education community are informed of the disciplinary action. Unless a certificate is revoked for life, an educator may reapply for a reinstatement in accordance with Alaska Statutes, at which time the Commission would review the case for another determination. A revocation is sent to the NASDTEC Clearinghouse for national distribution.

AS 14.20.030. Causes for Suspension or Revocation:

- (a) The Commissioner or the Professional Teaching Practices Commission may revoke or suspend a certificate for the following reasons:
- (1) *Incompetency*, which is defined as the inability or the unintentional or intentional failure to perform the teacher's customary teaching duties in a satisfactory manner;
 - (2) *Immorality*, which is defined as the commission of an act which, under the laws of the state constitutes a crime involving moral turpitude;
 - (3) *Substantial noncompliance* with the laws of the state or the regulations of the department; or
 - (4) Upon the determination by the Professional Teaching Practices Commission that there has been a *violation of ethical or professional standards or contractual obligations.*

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Complaints may be filed with the Commission by anyone. If the alleged action is a violation of the Code of Ethics of the Education Profession, the laws of the State of Alaska, or the Regulations of the Department of Education & Early Development, Commission staff conducts an investigation.

If there is sufficient evidence to indicate that a violation has occurred, an accusation is written and a hearing is held before the Commission. During the hearing, a hearing officer, appointed by the governor, presides. The hearing is held in accordance with the Alaska Administrative Procedure Act. All hearings are open to the public.

INQUIRIES (APPLICATIONS FOR CERTIFICATION)

PTPC staff reviewed one hundred fifty-five (155) applications for certification in which there were state or federal fingerprint checks indicating convictions. Included are initial, renewal/reinstatement, and student teaching applications. Seventy-three (73) applicants revealed convictions on their applications and subsequently most of those applications were immediately approved. A handful required a brief follow-up with the applicant.

Eighty-two (82) applicants for certification failed to divulge past convictions for criminal violations or action taken against their certificate in another state. All of these individuals were contacted. The applicants were informed that all convictions must be divulged and details provided on any application that requests that information, even convictions that have been set-aside or had a suspended imposition of sentence. Failure to do so in the future could be considered willful misrepresentation and be a cause for revocation. Seven (7) cases resulted in further investigation which resulted in 2 denials and 2 withdrawals. The remaining seventy-five (75) applications were subsequently approved.

INQUIRIES FROM OTHER STATES AND CANADA

PTPC staff responded to four (4) requests from other states for information regarding candidates for certification who reported that they have held, or do hold, an Alaska teaching certificate or who were listed on the NASDTEC Clearinghouse as having been sanctioned in Alaska. In addition PTPC staff pro-actively provided information to CA and NY on two educators who were recently sanctioned in Alaska and known to have moved to those states.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEWS

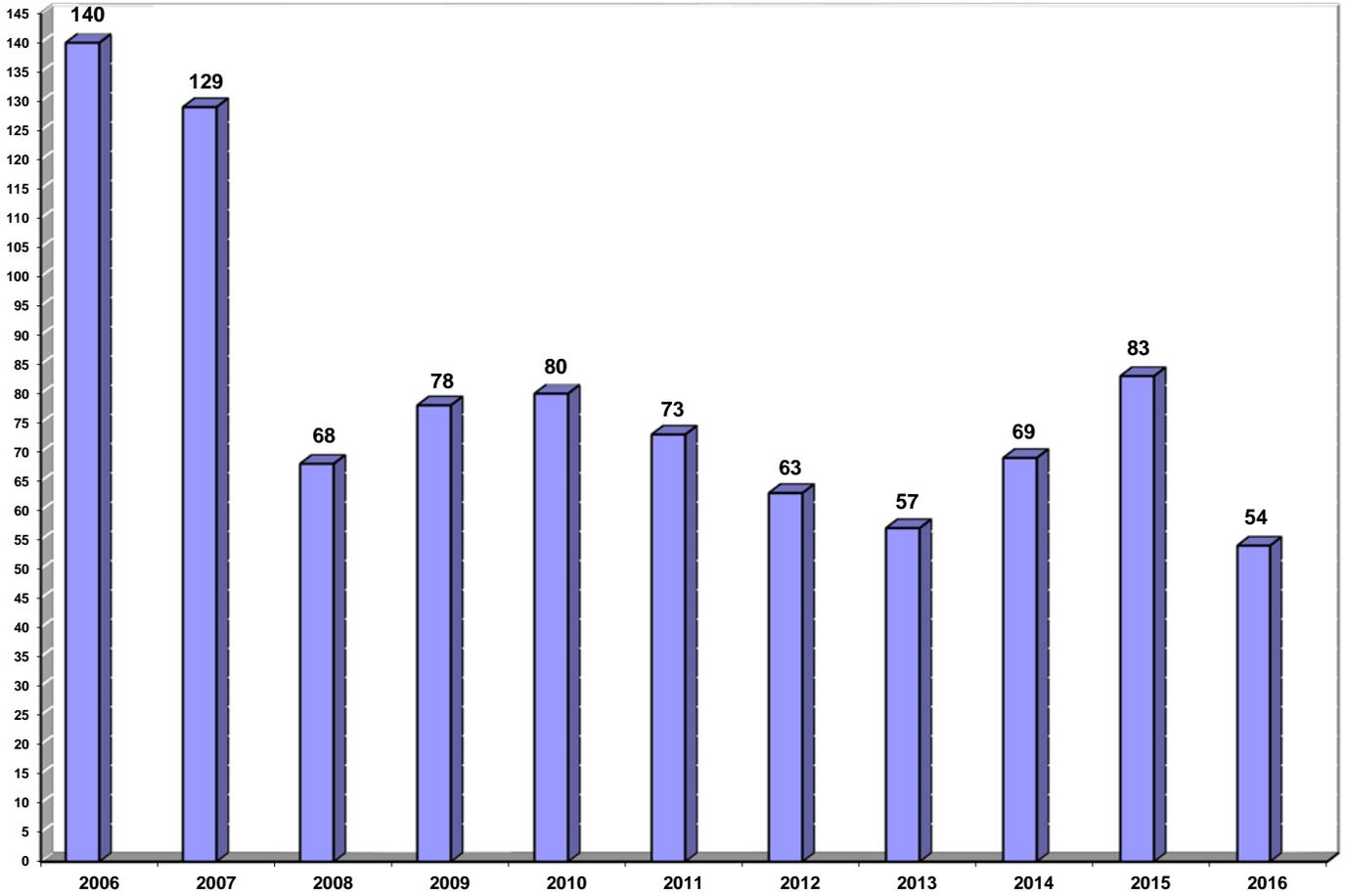
Administrative Reviews are held to evaluate PTPC staff's decisions to dismiss a case. There were seven Administrative Reviews held this year. In all seven cases the Commission voted unanimously to uphold PTPC staff's decision to dismiss the cases.

NEWSLETTER

The annual newsletter was published in February 2016 and distributed via U.S. Mail to all educators and other interested parties in Alaska through local schools and school districts. Future annual newsletters will be distributed electronically.

PRESENTATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Presentations on professionalism, professional ethics, and the role of the Commission were given to both elementary and secondary pre-service teacher candidates at the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA), the University of Alaska Fairbanks, the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) and Alaska Pacific University, as well as early childhood interns at UAA. Additional presentations were given to a variety of UAA and UAS educational leadership classes. Executive Director's activities included attending the Alaska Teacher Placement Job Fair, overseeing the Alaska Teacher of the Year Program, and attending the annual NASDTEC Professional Practices Institute.



PTPC CASES BY YEAR

FY 2016 IN REVIEW
(July 1, 2015-June 30, 2016)

The Commission met in general session three times. Twenty (20) educators were sanctioned.

DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS:

- 15-39 During its meeting on September 21, 2015, the Commission accepted the **surrender** of the Alaska Retired Teaching Certificate of **David F. Schwantes**.
- 15-42 During its meeting on September 21, 2015, the Commission accepted the **surrender** of the right to reinstate the Alaska Teaching Certificate of **Martin A. Bowman**.
- 15-63 During its meeting on September 21, 2015, the Commission issued an order for a **reprimand** to **Nathan Stamm**, who holds an Alaska Professional Teaching Certificate.
- 15-80 & 81 During its meeting on September 21, 2015, the Commission issued an order for a **reprimand** to **Larry B. Parker**, who holds an Alaska Administrative Certificate.
- 15-82 During its meeting on September 21, 2015, the Commission issued an order for a **reprimand** to **Linda Bates**, who holds an Alaska Professional Teaching Certificate.
- 15-83 During its meeting on September 21, 2015, the Commission issued an order **warning a teacher**.
- 16-10 During its meeting on September 21, 2015, the Commission issued an order for a **one-year suspension and of the right to apply for renewal** of the Alaska Initial Teaching Certificate of **Criss Mitchell** effective September 2, 2015.
- 14-49 During its meeting on January 25-26, 2016, the Commission issued an order for a **two-year suspension** of the Alaska Professional Teaching Certificate of **David C. Bierria** effective August 1, 2015.
- 15-65 During its meeting on January 25-26, 2016, the Commission accepted the **surrender** of the Alaska Professional Teaching Certificate of **Kim R. Cresap**.
- 16-02 During its meeting on January 25-26, 2016, the Commission accepted the **surrender** of the Alaska Professional Teaching Certificate of **Michael J. Wier**.
- 16-03 During its meeting on January 25-26, 2016, the Commission issued an order for an **eighteen (18) month suspension** of the Alaska Professional Teaching Certificate of **Tiffany H. Shuttleworth** effective May 23, 2015.
- 16-05 During its meeting on January 25-26, 2016, the Commission issued an order for a **one-year suspension** of the Alaska Professional Teaching Certificate of **Robert F. Thompson** effective August 10, 2015.
- 16-11 During its meeting on January 25-26, 2016, the Commission issued an order for a **one-year suspension** of the Alaska Initial Teaching Certificate of **Mary M. Strickland** effective August 24, 2015.

- 16-13 During its meeting on January 25-26, 2016, the Commission issued an order **warning a teacher.**
- 16-14 During its meeting on January 25-26, 2016, the Commission issued an order for a **one-year suspension** of the Alaska Initial Teaching Certificate of **Aimee E. Goodew** effective October 1, 2015.
- 16-15 During its meeting on January 25-26, 2016, the Commission issued an order for a **one-year suspension** of the Alaska Initial Teaching Certificate of **Valerie J. Tillman** effective September 25, 2015.
- 16-20 During its meeting on January 25-26, 2016, the Commission accepted the **surrender** of the Alaska Professional Teaching Certificate of **Susanna M. DiFranco.**
- 15-67 During its meeting on April 25, 2016, the Commission issued an order **warning a teacher.**
- 16-19 During its meeting on April 25, 2016, the Commission issued an order for a **one-year suspension** of the Alaska Initial Teaching Certificate of **Harry H. Faur** effective October 22, 2015.
- 16-24 During its meeting on April 25, 2016, the Commission issued an order for a **six (6) month suspension** of the Alaska Professional Teaching Certificate of **Destiny S. Neade** effective January 4, 2016

Final Orders
(Frequency of Sanctions Invoked)

	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016
Sexual Harassment of Staff								1			
Sexual Misconduct with Students	2	1	2	3	2	3	3	3	2		4
Drug, Alcohol Offenses	2			1	1						
Criminal Conduct, Non-Drug		2	1	1					2	1	1
Fraudulent Certificates/Applications	1										
Contract Violations	1	3	3	6	3	7	7	7	3	4	7
Professional Misconduct	2	1	4	1	7	2	9	3	5	10	8
Total	8	7	10	12	13	12	19	14	12	15	20

TEACHING PROFESSION (14.20.370)

Teachers required by state law to be certificated, instructors in institutions of higher learning, school administrators, and school counselors are within the teaching profession.

EFFECT OF THE CODE OF ETHICS (14.20.480)

Members of the teaching profession are obligated to abide by the professional teaching standards adopted by the Professional Teaching Practices Commission.

CODE OF ETHICS (20 AAC 10.020)

The Commission staff provides copies of the Code of Ethics of the Education Profession upon requests from any Alaskan.

MANDATORY REPORTING (20 ACC 10.020 (b)(4))

The Code of Ethics requires that knowledge of physical abuse of a student or sexual conduct with a student by an educator must be reported to the Commission.

NATIONAL CLEARINGHOUSE

The National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) maintain a clearinghouse where disciplinary action higher than a warning against an educator in any state (or province in Canada) is recorded. This database is not accessible by the general public. Soon, however, this database will be accessible by school districts for a fee.

PTPC WEB SITE

The PTPC Handbook for Alaska Educators, which includes the Alaska statute that created the Commission, the Code of Ethics, the complaint form, a list of educators sanctioned in Alaska, and the investigative procedures of the Commission, can be found at education.alaska.gov/ptpc/. PTPC newsletters and annual reports are also available on the Web site.

DISTRIBUTION OF HANDBOOK (20 AAC 10.310)

Copies of the Alaska State Professional Teaching Practices Commission's Handbook for Alaska Educators shall be conspicuously displayed and available, at every education institution in the state whose employees are members of the teaching profession under AS 14.20.370.

COMPLAINTS

Complaints may be submitted to the Commission by members of the education profession or by the public. Notification by a state agency to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission that an educator has committed a crime may also result in action by the PTPC. Pursuant to 20 AAC 10.210(b): *Unless the alleged act would be grounds for discipline under AS 14.20.030, the staff may not investigate school district personnel actions, including hiring, evaluation, transfer, reassignment, or dismissal of staff; or curriculum actions.*

FY 2016 FINANCIAL REPORT
July 1, 2015 - June 30, 2016

	Authorization	Actual Disbursements	Encumbrances	Authorization Balance
Personal Services	\$220,100.00	\$214,920.99	\$0.00	\$5,179.01
Travel	\$16,700.00	\$9,991.12	\$0.00	\$6,708.88
Contractual	\$64,500.00	\$53,461.39	\$0.00	\$11,038.61
Commodities	\$2,600.00	\$987.30	\$0.00	\$1,612.70
Totals	\$303,900.00	\$279,360.80	\$0.00	\$24,539.20

Personal Services: Salaries (including benefits)

Travel: Executive Director, Commissioners

- Conferences
- Commission Meetings
- Presentations
- Investigations

Contractual: Interagency Services

- Department of Administration
- Department of Education
- Department of Law
- Postage
- Print/Copy/Graphics
- Telecommunications

Commodities:

- Business Supplies
- Equipment and Furniture
- Information Technology Equipment

PROFESSIONAL TEACHING PRACTICES COMMISSION**FY '16**

<u>MEMBER</u>	<u>DATE APPOINTED</u>	<u>REAPPOINTED</u>	<u>TERM EXPIRES</u>
<i>David DeVaughn</i> Teacher Representative (FNSBSD) 520 Fifth Avenue Fairbanks, AK 99701	3/1/2013	3/1/2016	3/1/2019
<i>Paul Prussing</i> DEED Representative P.O. Box 110500 Juneau, AK. 99811	3/1/2016		3/1/2019
<i>Rebecca Himschoot</i> Teacher Representative (SSD) P.O. Box 6075 Sitka, AK 99835	3/1/2015		3/1/2018
<i>Dr. Martin Laster</i> Higher Ed Representative (UAS) 8133 Pinewood Dr. Juneau, AK 99801	8/15/2012	3/1/2015	3/1/2018
<i>David Legg</i> Principal Representative (ASD) 16525 Birchwood Loop Rd Chugiak, AK 99567	3/1/2015		3/1/2018
<i>Melody Mann, Chair</i> Teacher Representative (MSBSD) 501 N. Gulkana St. Palmer, AK 99645	3/1/2013	3/1/2016	3/1/2019
<i>David Piazza</i> Superintendent Representative (SWRSD) P.O. Box 90 Dillingham, AK. 99576	1/10/2014		3/1/2017
<i>Frances Roberts, Secretary</i> Teacher Representative (KPBSD) 495 Mountain View Dr. Homer, AK 99603	3/1/2013	3/1/2016	3/1/2019
<i>Maureen van Wagner, Vice Chair</i> Teacher Representative (ASD) 5530 E. Northern Light Blvd. Anchorage, AK 99504	3/1/2014		3/1/2017
<i>James A. Seitz</i> Executive Director 1016 West 6 th Ave., Suite 302 Anchorage, AK 99501 jim.seitz@alaska.gov 907-269-6579	6/1/2013		