

PTPC ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2016

Boundaries in the Digital Age

Maintaining appropriate boundaries with students is a concern of every educator. We know that developing a positive, professional relationship with students can be an important factor in student achievement. Educators by their very nature are caring people. We are concerned about our students and know that many factors in their lives outside of school might impact a student's learning.

The Digital Age presents unlimited opportunities for student learning. But at the same time it presents many potential pitfalls for well-intentioned educators, especially teachers. Frederick S. Lane, in his 2015 book *Cybertraps for Educators*, delves into a broad range of potential "cybertraps." This article will be limited to cybertraps that directly involve students.



- Do you friend students on your personal Facebook page?
- Do you friend former students on Facebook? If so, how much time has passed since they were your student? (Also, is it OK for a middle school teacher to friend a former student who is currently going to high school in a different building?)
- Are any of your students' parents your Facebook friends?
- Do you give your students or their parents/guardians your personal cell phone number?
- Do you send individual texts or emails to any of your students (or their parents) from your personal cell phone or personal email account?

Alaska Teacher Standard 7 (*A teacher works as a partner with parents, families, and the community*) addresses the importance of communication. The Digital Age has certainly provided many more means, readily accessible to almost all parents and students, by which communication can occur. But it is also by these same forms of communication that well-intentioned educators can start down a "slippery slope" that can lead to unintended consequences for both the student and the educator.

Although it is not a direct violation of any section of the Code of Ethics of the Education Profession if you answered "yes" to any of the questions above, by doing so you may inadvertently be going down a path that will lead to Code of Ethics violations. (Note: There might be a violation of school or district policy. Be aware of your district policy specific to Facebook, texting, and emailing.) Educators, especially teachers, are urged to be extra cautious and vigilant in communicating with students and parents using social media, texting, or emailing using your personal accounts. This can be challenging for educators in smaller communities who have been personally acquainted with their students (and their parents/guardians) long before they were in your classroom.

As of July 1, 2015 the **PTPC is funded** through the \$75 increase in certification fees. This change was approved by the State Board of Education on March 20, 2015 as per legislative intent.

State of Alaska Professional Teaching Practices Commission

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COMMISSION MEMBERS

Melody Mann (Chair)
Teacher Representative

Maureen van Wagner (Vice Chair)
Teacher Representative

Francie Roberts (Secretary)
Teacher Representative

David Piazza
Superintendent Representative

Eric Fry
DEED Representative

Rebecca Himschoot
Teacher Representative

David Legg
Principal Representative

David DeVaughn
Teacher Representative

Dr. Martin Laster
Higher-Ed Representative

PTPC STAFF
James A. Seitz
Executive Director

Atiya M. Lawhorne
Administrative Assistant

Boundary violations often occur when educators assume a role in which they are not prepared.

COMMISSION ACTION

During its January 2015 meeting:

- the Commission issued an order for a **three-year suspension** of the Professional Teaching Certificate of **Wilma Osborne** effective January 22, 2015.
- the Commission issued an order for a **one-year suspension and the right to apply for renewal** of the Initial Teaching Certificate of **Jacob Ciesielczyk** effective June 30, 2014.
- the Commission issued an order for a **reprimand** to Kathleen J. Galau, who holds a Professional Teaching Certificate.
- the Commission issued an order for a **one-year suspension** of the Professional Teaching Certificate of **Keenan M. Hollister** effective June 1, 2014.
- the Commission issued a **warning** to an educator.



During its April 2015 meeting:

- the Commission issued an order for a **one-year suspension** of the Professional Teaching Certificate of **LaRee Eldridge** effective February 18, 2015.
- the Commission issued an order for a **three-year suspension** of the Professional Teaching Certificate of **Sean P. Costello** effective April 24, 2015.
- the Commission **denied** the **reinstatement** of the Professional Teaching Certificate of **Christopher Rogers**.
- the Commission **approved** the **reinstatement** of the Professional Teaching Certificate of **Janice Glover** effective July 1, 2015.
- the Commission issued a **warning** to two educators.
- the Commission conducted an administrative review of staff's decision to dismiss ten cases. Staff's decision to dismiss was upheld.

During its September 2015 meeting:

- the Commission accepted the **surrender** of the Retired Teaching Certificate of **David F. Schwantes** effective September 21, 2015.
- the Commission accepted the **surrender** of the right to reinstate the Initial Teaching Certificate of **Martin A. Bowman** effective September 21, 2015.
- the Commission issued an order for a **reprimand** to **Nathan Stamm**, who holds a Professional Teaching Certificate.
- the Commission issued an order for a **reprimand** to **Larry B. Parker**, who holds an Administrative Certificate.
- the Commission issued an order for a **reprimand** to **Linda Bates**, who holds a Professional Teaching Certificate.
- the Commission issued a **warning** to an educator.
- the Commission issued an order for a **one-year suspension of the right to apply for renewal** of the Professional Teaching Certificate of **Criss Mitchell** effective September 2, 2015.
- the Commission conducted an administrative review of staff's decision to dismiss three cases. Staff's decision to dismiss was upheld.

Do you know the date your certificate will expire? (<https://education.alaska.gov/TeacherCertification/CertificationsSearch.cfm>)



If certificated educators quit before the school year is over, that is considered a "breach of contract" and subject to a sanction by the Commission.



The Professional Teaching Practices Commission will meet in general session **January 25-26, 2016 and April 25-26, 2016**. Commission meetings are held in the Willawaw conference room of the Alaska State Library, 344 West 3rd Avenue in Anchorage. Meetings are open to the public.

NEW COMMISSIONERS

David Legg is the new principal representative on the Commission. He is currently principal of Chugiak High School. Previously he has been a teacher, building administrator, or district administrator in the Anchorage School District, Kenai Peninsula Borough School District, the Southwest Region School District, and the North Slope Borough School District. He has a B.A. in Special Education from Arizona State University (1997), a Masters in Educational Leadership (2000) and Post Graduate Certificate (2003) from the University of Alaska Anchorage, and an Ed. D. in Educational Leadership from Pepperdine University (2013).

Rebecca Himshoot is the new teacher representative on the Commission. She currently teaches science at Keet Gooshi Heen Elementary School in Sitka, where she has been since 2004. She has teaching experience in Hawaii, Kuwait, and Sand Point, Alaska. Ms. Himshoot has undergraduate degrees in Russian Language Education and Elementary Education from Western Washington University and University of Alaska Southeast, respectively. She received a Master of Arts in Administration and Curriculum from Gonzaga University in 2000.

Eric Fry, EED representative on the Commission, will term out on March 1, 2016 after serving two, three-year terms. His unwavering service to the Commission, as well as his statewide perspective, have been an asset to the Commission. The Governor will appoint a new member to the PTPC shortly. Appointments are subject to legislative approval.

Code of Ethics Quiz – True or False



1. The Code of Ethics applies to substitute teachers.
2. It is a violation of the Code of Ethics for a teacher to accept a gift from students or parents.
3. The section of the Code of Ethics that is most often violated is (d)(15) – “may not unlawfully breach a professional employment contract.”
4. It is a violation of the Code of Ethics for a teacher to “friend” a former student (one who has recently graduated) on Facebook.

1. **True**, if the substitute is *certificated*. Otherwise, **false**. The Code of Ethics applies only to educators who are certificated. However, some districts have policy that all school employees, regardless of the nature of their job, abide by the Code of Ethics.
2. **True**, if the gift “might influence or appear to influence professional judgment.” However, a small gift (low monetary value), handmade or homemade gift, or token gift given to an educator as a general appreciation most likely would not be considered an ethical violation. Some districts have policies that spell this out further. If in doubt, check with your district office.
3. **True**. When you sign a contract, you are promising to stay on the job for the duration of the contract (generally the entire school year). If circumstances arise that may be reason for you to leave employment before the contract is over, please talk with your district office immediately. Many districts have penalties for leaving before the contract is over.
4. **False**, on the surface. Although there might be compelling (and good) reasons to “stay in touch” with former (recently graduated) students, educators need to be vigilant and careful to not establish social media “friend” relationships too soon with someone who has just graduated. Educators are advised to let a significant period of time elapse before establishing “adult friend” relationships. It is just too easy for things to go south. Section (b)(7) of the Code of Ethics – “may not use professional relationships for private advantage or gain” – may apply here.



ALASKA TEACHER OF THE YEAR:

The **Alaska Department of Education & Early Development** named **Amy Jo Meiners**, an extended learning teacher at Auke Bay Elementary and Riverbend Elementary Schools in Juneau, the Alaska Teacher of the Year 2016. The Award was presented during the annual conference of the Association of Alaska School Boards in Anchorage in November 2015.

Ms. Meiners has taught for 26 years, nine in her current position. She holds a bachelor’s degree from Whitworth University and over 100 credits in continuing education classes through the University of Alaska. Amy Jo is a positive role model who inspires curiosity and lifelong learning by knowing each and every one of her students’ needs and challenges making learning meaningful and providing skills that will transfer to real life. She is dedicated to student learning while inspiring fellow staff. Amy Jo is available for Speaking Engagements: 907-796-5275 email: amyjo.meiners@juneauschools.org Twitter: [Alaska_TOY](#). You may also follow her year as TOY by reading her blog: <https://aktoy2016.wordpress.com/>.

Frances (Francie) Roberts, a Math teacher at Homer High School, was named alternate for the Alaska Teacher of the Year 2016. Ms. Roberts, has taught for 22 years, all in her present position. She holds a bachelor’s degree from the University of Alaska Anchorage and a master’s degree from Montana State University. Ms. Roberts became an educator after a career as a meteorologist and co-owner of a sheep and cattle ranch.

Nominate a teacher who exemplifies excellence in the classroom to be the 2017 Alaska Teacher of the Year. Nomination forms can be found at <https://education.alaska.gov/RecognitionPrograms/TOY/> and are due by April 29, 2016. Contact Atiya.Lawhorne@alaska.gov with questions.

ALASKA PRINCIPALS OF THE YEAR:

The **Alaska Association of Elementary School Principals (AAESP)** announced that **Anita Stevens**, principal of Chinook Elementary School in Anchorage, has been selected by her peers as the Alaska National Distinguished Principal for 2015. The **Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals (AASSP)** selected **Cessilye Williams**, of Clark Middle School in the Anchorage School District, and **Carrie Sumner**, of Begich Middle School in the Anchorage School District as the 2015 Alaska Principal and Assistant Principal of the Year, respectively.

ALASKA SUPERINTENDENT OF THE YEAR:

The **Alaska Superintendents Association (ASA)** announced that Chugach School District Superintendent, **Dr. Bob Crumley**, has been selected by his peers as Alaska’s 2016 Superintendent of the Year. Dr. Crumley became the superintendent in the Chugach School District on July 1, 2005 and has successfully served for ten years in this position making him one of the longest continually serving superintendents in the State of Alaska.

REMINDER:

- ✓ Read your employment contract;
- ✓ Follow the terms of your employment contract;
- ✓ Follow district procedure when securing release from your employment contract;
- ✓ Do not leave a former position for a new one unless you are granted release from your employment contract.

Commission staff is available to provide presentations on the Code of Ethics of the Education Profession and the role of the Commission. The presentation includes discussions regarding professionalism and professional responsibilities.

Contact the State of Alaska Professional Teaching Practices Commission to arrange presentations in your district.

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