



*Photograph by Donald Zano*

**ALASKA  
PROFESSIONAL TEACHING  
PRACTICES COMMISSION**

**ANNUAL REPORT  
2017**

## ***INTRODUCTION***

The Alaska State Professional Teaching Practices Commission (PTPC) submits its report for Fiscal Year 2017. 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 2017, as well as 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, 2016 through June 30, 2017. It is prepared on behalf of the Commission by the Executive Director, James A. Seitz.

## ***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 learning. 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 institutions of higher learning. The Commissions’ 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 ninety-eight (198) applications for certification in which there were state or federal fingerprint checks indicating convictions, or in which one of the character questions (background information) was checked “yes.” This was an increase of 43 from last year. This includes initial, renewal/reinstatement, and student teaching applications. One hundred six (106) applicants divulged convictions (or other actions) on their applications and subsequently most of those applications were immediately approved. A handful required a brief follow-up with the applicant before being approved.

Ninety-two (92) 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 an explanation must be provided on any application, now or in the future, that requests that information. This applies even if convictions have been set-aside, resulted in a suspended imposition of sentence, or were from many years ago. Failure to do so in the future could be considered willful misrepresentation and be a cause for revocation. All ninety-two applicants were eventually approved.

## **INQUIRIES FROM OTHER STATES AND CANADA**

PTPC staff responded to five (5) requests from other states for information regarding candidates for certification who reported that they have held, or do hold, an Alaska education certificate or who were listed on the NASDTEC Clearinghouse as having been sanctioned in Alaska.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEWS**

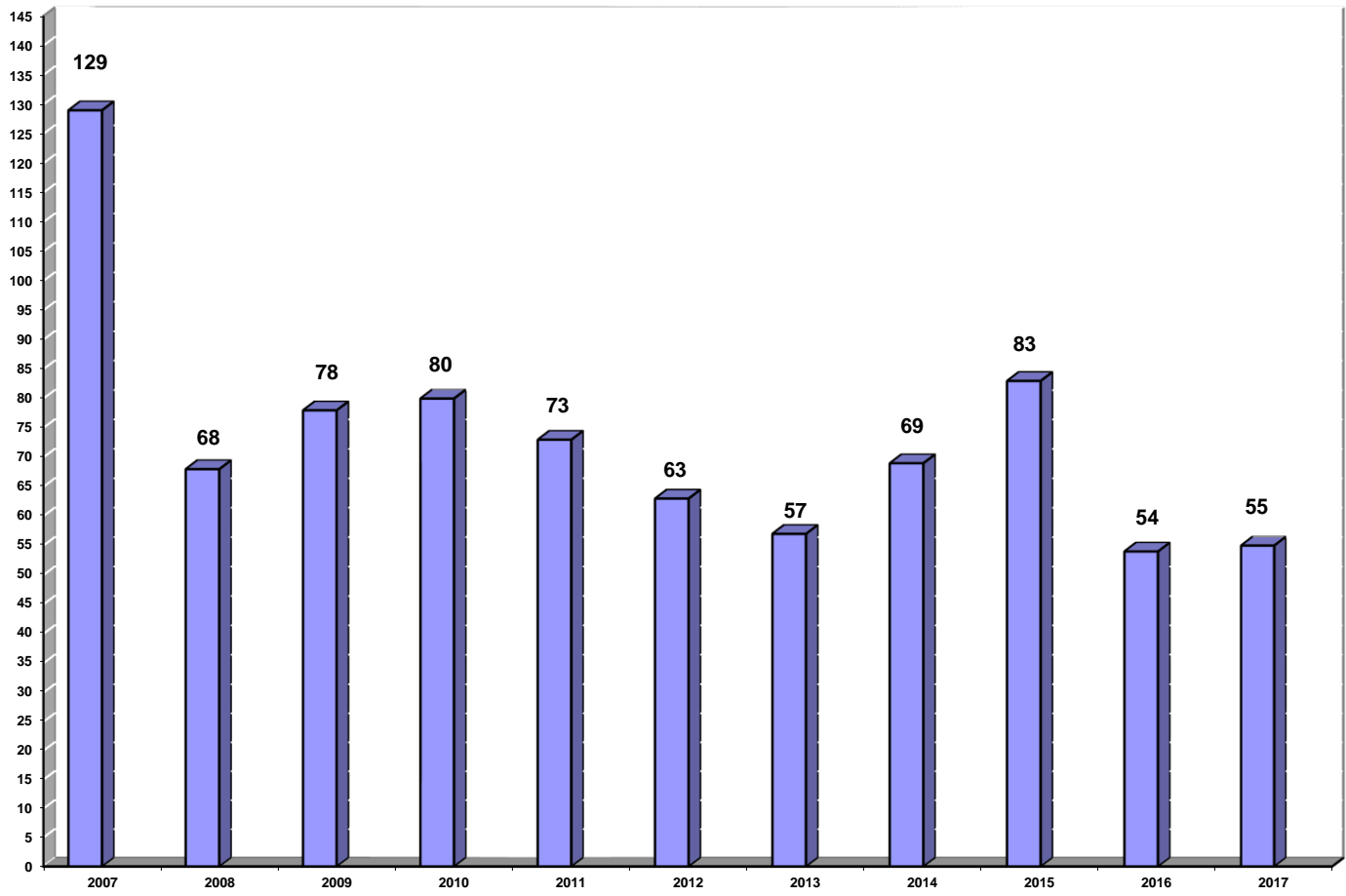
Administrative Reviews are held to evaluate PTPC staff’s decisions to dismiss a case. There were no requests for Administrative Reviews this year. An Administrative Review can only be requested by the Complainant.

## **NEWSLETTER**

The annual newsletter was published in April 2017 and distributed electronically to all school districts (through the superintendent) and to other education stakeholders in Alaska. The annual newsletter was also distributed as part of the Department of Education and Early Development’s weekly *Information Exchange Newsletter*. It is also posted on the PTPC website. <https://education.alaska.gov/ptpc/> Paper copies of the newsletter are available upon request.

## **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 (UAF), the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) and Alaska Pacific University (APU), as well as early childhood interns at UAA. New this year were presentations made to a substitute teacher’s class which was a joint effort of UAS and Juneau School District. Executive Director’s activities included attending the Alaska Teacher Placement Job Fair and attending the annual NASDTEC Professional Practices Institute.



## **PTPC CASES BY YEAR**

***FY 2017 IN REVIEW***  
***(July 1, 2016-June 30, 2017)***

The Commission met in general session three times. Thirteen (13) educators were sanctioned in FY 2017. This is on par with the yearly average of 12.9 educators sanctioned over the last twelve years.

**DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS:**

- 16-23 During its meeting on October 3, 2016, the Commission issued an order **warning** the holder of an Alaska Professional Teacher Certificate.
- 16-44 During its meeting on October 3, 2016, the Commission ordered a **one-year suspension** of the Alaska Initial Teaching Certificate of **Sherilyn J. Benson** effective March 25, 2016.
- 16-45 During its meeting on October 3, 2016, the Commission issued an order **warning** an educator who holds both an Alaska Professional Teacher Certificate and also an Alaska Administrative Certificate.
- 16-50 During its meeting on October 3, 2016, the Commission issued an order **warning** the holder of an Alaska Professional Teacher Certificate.
- 17-01 During its meeting on October 3, 2016, the Commission ordered a **one-year suspension** of the Alaska Initial Teaching Certificate of **Joshua D. Doty** effective July 19, 2016.
- 17-02 During its meeting on October 3, 2016, the Commission issued an order **warning** the holder of an Alaska Initial Teacher Certificate.
- 17-09 During its meeting on January 26-27, 2017, the Commission issued an order **warning** the holder of an Alaska Initial Teaching Certificate.
- 17-14 During its meeting on January 26-27, 2017, the Commission issued an order **reprimanding** **Leslie A. Wallace**, who holds an Alaska Professional Teaching Certificate and an Alaska Special Services Certificate.
- 17-18 During its meeting on January 26-27, 2017, the Commission ordered an **eighteen-month suspension** of the Alaska Professional Teaching Certificate of **John W. Hutchinson** effective January 1, 2017.
- 17-19 During its meeting on April 24, 2017, the Commission ordered a **30-day suspension** (with conditions for reinstatement) of the Alaska Professional Teaching Certificate of **Troy M. Zimmerman** effective May 27, 2017.
- 17-21 During its meeting on April 24, 2017, the Commission issued an order **reprimanding** **Rodney Wayne Boggs**, who holds an Alaska Provisional Administrative Certificate.
- 17-24 During its meeting on April 24, 2017, the Commission ordered a **one-year suspension** of the Alaska Initial Teaching Certificate of **Michelle A. Medlin** effective January 3, 2017.
- 17-30 During its meeting on April 24, 2017, the Commission ordered a **one-year suspension** of the Alaska Initial Teaching Certificate of **Audrey Leary** effective January 13, 2017.

## Final Orders

*(Frequency of Sanctions Invoked by type of violation)*

	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017
<b>Sexual Harassment of Staff</b>								1				
<b>Sexual Misconduct with Students</b>	2	1	2	3	2	3	3	3	2		4	
<b>Drug, Alcohol Offenses</b>	2			1	1							3
<b>Criminal Conduct, Non-Drug</b>		2	1	1					2	1	1	1
<b>Fraudulent Certificates/Applications</b>	1											
<b>Contract Violations</b>	1	3	3	6	3	7	7	7	3	4	7	6
<b>Professional Misconduct</b>	2	1	4	1	7	2	9	3	5	10	8	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>13</b>

### ***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/](http://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 2017 FINANCIAL REPORT**  
**July 1, 2016 - June 30, 2017**

	Authorization	Actual Disbursements	Encumbrances	Authorization Balance
<b>Personal Services</b>	\$208,600.00	\$151,993.48	\$0.00	\$56,606.52
<b>Travel</b>	\$16,700.00	\$8474.52	\$0.00	\$8,225.48
<b>Contractual Services</b>	\$72,200.00	\$37,900.04	\$0.00	\$34,299.96
<b>Commodities</b>	\$2,600.00	\$159.47	\$799.45	\$1,641.08
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$301,000.00</b>	<b>\$198,527.51</b>	<b>\$799.45</b>	<b>\$100,773.04</b>

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 (new computer)

**PROFESSIONAL TEACHING PRACTICES COMMISSION****FY '17**

<b><u>MEMBER</u></b>	<b><u>DATE APPOINTED</u></b>	<b><u>REAPPOINTED</u></b>	<b><u>TERM EXPIRES</u></b>
<b><i>David DeVaughn</i></b> Teacher Representative North Pole (Fairbanks North Star Borough School District)	3/1/2013	3/1/2016	3/1/2019
<b><i>Diane Kardash</i></b> Higher Education Representative North Pole (University of Alaska Fairbanks)	5/26/2017		3/1/2018
<b><i>David Legg</i></b> Principal Representative Chugiak (Anchorage School District)	3/1/2015		3/1/2018
<b><i>Melody Mann, Chair</i></b> Teacher Representative Wasilla (Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District)	3/1/2013	3/1/2016	3/1/2019
<b><i>David Piazza</i></b> Superintendent Representative Dillingham (Southwest Region School District)	1/10/2014	3/1/2017	3/1/2020
<b><i>Paul Prussing</i></b> Department Representative Douglas (Department of Education and Early Development)	3/1/2016		3/1/2019
<b><i>Frances Roberts, Secretary</i></b> Teacher Representative Homer (Kenai Peninsula Borough School District; retired)	3/1/2013	3/1/2016	3/1/2019
<b><i>Kent Runion</i></b> Teacher Representative Nome (Nome Public Schools)	11/18/2016		3/1/2018
<b><i>Maureen van Wagner, Vice Chair</i></b> Teacher Representative Anchorage (Anchorage School District)	3/1/2014	3/1/2017	3/1/2020

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***James A. Seitz***  
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6/1/2013  
Note: New physical and mailing address effective 7/1/17  
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Anchorage, AK 99501