

PTPC ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2017

Code of Ethics of the Education Profession

The Alaska Code of Ethics of the Education Profession is a set of behaviors that the education profession deems essential in guiding the professional lives, and in some cases the personal lives, of educators. Although there might be some overlap with criminal violations or contractual violations, the Professional Teaching Practices Commission's primary focus is ethical violations (i.e. violations of the Code of Ethics). The Code of Ethics is a higher standard that educators are held to.

The Professional Teaching Practices Commission has statutory authority to amend the Code of Ethics and has done so numerous times since 1975. Until this year the most recent major update was in 2000. At the January 2017 meeting the Commission approved numerous changes to update and clarify aspects of the Code of Ethics. The proposals are currently being reviewed by the Department of Law before they are sent to the Lieutenant Governor's office for final approval. Any of the twelve proposals could be rejected if they do not pass legal review.

The proposals, as approved the Commission and under review by the Department of Law, are posted on the PTPC website in the "News" section.

<https://education.alaska.gov/ptpc/>

**State of Alaska
Professional Teaching
Practices Commission**

COMMISSION MEMBERS

Melody Mann (Chair)

Teacher Representative

Maureen van Wagner (Vice Chair)

Teacher Representative

Francie Roberts (Secretary)

Teacher Representative

David Piazza

Superintendent Representative

Paul Prussing DEED

Representative

Kent Runion

Teacher Representative

David Legg

Principal Representative

David DeVaughn

Teacher Representative

(Vacant)

Higher-Ed Representative

Certification Reminders

Mandatory trainings required beginning June 30, 2017. You need to demonstrate all **4 trainings** have been completed within five years prior to the date of your application.

<https://education.alaska.gov/TeacherCertification/mandatorytraining.html>

Know the expiration date of your certificate! Five-year certificates expire on your birthday. All others expire on June 30 or December 31. You may renew your certificate up to one year before it expires.

<https://education.alaska.gov/TeacherCertification/OnlineRenewal>

Do not let your certificate lapse! You are then non-compliant. At that time you are no longer contributing to TRS. In addition your district might impose other measures such as reduction in pay (being paid as a substitute) and loss of benefits.

Notify Teacher Certification of any changes to your contact information.

<https://education.alaska.gov/TeacherCertification/ContactChange/>

COMMISSION ACTION



During its January 2016 meeting:

- the Commission issued an order for a **two-year suspension** of the Alaska Professional Teaching Certificate of **David C. Biernia** effective August 1, 2015.
- the Commission accepted the **surrender** of the Alaska Professional Teaching Certificate of **Kim R. Cresap**.
- the Commission accepted the **surrender** of the Alaska Professional Teaching Certificate of **Michael J. Wier**.
- 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.
- the Commission issued an order for a **one-year suspension** of the Alaska Professional Teaching Certificate of **Robert F. Thompson** effective August 10, 2015.
- the Commission issued an order for a **one-year suspension** of the Alaska Initial Teaching Certificate of **Mary M. Strickland** effective August 24, 2015.
- the Commission issued a **warning** to an educator.
- the Commission issued an order for a **one-year suspension** of the Alaska Initial Teaching Certificate of **Aimee E. Goodew** effective October 1, 2015.
- the Commission issued an order for a **one-year suspension** of the Alaska Initial Teaching Certificate of **Valerie J. Tillman** effective September 25, 2015.
- the Commission accepted the **surrender** of the Alaska Professional Teaching Certificate of **Susanna M. DiFranco**.

During its April 2016 meeting:

- the Commission issued a **warning** an educator.
- the Commission issued an order for a **one-year suspension** of the Alaska Initial Teaching Certificate of **Harry H. Faur** effective October 22, 2015.
- 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.

During its October 2016 meeting:

- the Commission issued a **warning** to four educators.
- the Commission ordered a **one-year suspension** of the Alaska Initial Teaching Certificate of **Sherilyn J. Benson** effective March 25, 2016.
- the Commission ordered a **one-year suspension** of the Alaska Initial Teaching Certificate of **Joshua D. Doty** effective July 19, 2016.

“The commission will report on all discipline taken since last publication in the commission’s periodic publication of commission activity. The commission will not identify name of the respondent in cases where only a warning was given.” [20 AAC 10.300 (d)]

A GOOD READ: Cybertraps for Educators, by Frederick S. Lane (2015)
!“Cybertraps for Educators offers teachers and school administrators a frank and sobering look at the various legal risks they face from the use and misuse of electronic devices and social media. . . This timely book explores the myriad challenges that technology poses for today’s teachers.”



The Professional Teaching Practices Commission will meet in general session **April 24-25, 2017**. Meetings are held in the 3rd floor conference room (Suite 304) at 1016 West 6th Avenue in downtown Anchorage. Meetings are open to the public.

NEW COMMISSIONERS

Paul Prussing is the new DEED representative on the Commission. Paul has been with DEED for 17 years and currently serves as the Acting Director of the Division of Teaching & Learning Support (TLS). Previously he taught secondary math and science and held various school district positions in Alaska. He has also been a commercial fisherman. Mr. Prussing received a Bachelor's of Science in Education from Oregon State University. He is a graduate of Juneau Douglas High School and has resided in Alaska for over 40 years.

Kent Runion is the new teacher representative on the Commission, having been appointed by the Governor to complete the term of Rebecca Himschoot, who recently resigned after being appointed to the State Board of Education. Kent teaches government, economics, and world studies at Nome-Beltz High School where he has taught since 2010. He has also taught in several schools in Ohio. Mr. Runion has an undergraduate degree in Religion and a Master of Arts in Education from Mount Vernon Nazarene University.

When vacancies arise, constituent groups (NEA-AK, AAESP & AASSP, APA, DEED, UA) submit nominations to the Governor who then makes appointments, which are then subject to legislative confirmation. Terms are for 3 years. Commissioners may serve 2 terms. They receive no compensation for their service but do receive per diem (according to law) and are granted administrative leave with pay for performance of official duties.

Code of Ethics Quiz – True or False



1. It is a violation of the Code of Ethics for a teacher to give his/her cell phone number to students.
2. It is a violation of the Code of Ethics for an educator to tell a student that he/she looks nice.
3. It is a violation of the Code of Ethics for an educator to be involved in a marijuana business in Alaska.

1. **False.** Educators may have professional and totally justifiable reasons in doing this. (Ex. Quick communication with students on a school sponsored travel trip.) There is nothing in the Code of Ethics that prohibits this per se. Educators are cautioned, however, that it is all too easy for the professional teacher-student relationship to morph into a personal communication that may lead to a Code of Ethics violation. This is a "slippery slope" that educators need be cognizant of.

2. **False,** most likely, especially when done in simply a complimentary way. However, it is all too easy for someone to misconstrue a compliment, especially if between a secondary teacher and student of the opposite sex. Better, even more, including elementary teachers, is to comment on a clothing item as opposed to the person. (Ex. I like your red dress.) When complimenting a student's attire, one must be careful that other students are not left out or excluded, especially if they cannot afford "nice" clothes.

3. **Good question!** Clearly there can be no overlap between the involvement and the teacher's classroom. Sections (c)(5), (c)(8), and possibly others would be ethical violations. Even though many aspects of the marijuana industry are legal on a state level, there are many prohibitions at the federal level. As with all cases, the Commission would consider all the circumstances surrounding the event. Although most Code of Ethics violations occur during the school year and in direct connection to the school or district, educators have been sanctioned for non-school related events.



ALASKA TEACHER OF THE YEAR:

The **Alaska Department of Education & Early Development** named **James Harris**, an English teacher at Soldotna High School, the Alaska Teacher of the Year 2017. The announcement was made by Alaska Education Commissioner Dr. Michael Johnson at a ceremony in Soldotna on December 6, 2016.

Mr. Harris has taught for 12 years, seven in his current position. He holds a bachelor’s degree in English from Western State College of Colorado, a master of fine arts degree in creative writing from UAF, and a MAT from UAS. He says, “Through literature I hope to help my students empathize with the human story, open themselves up to the joys, sufferings, motivations, disappointments, and triumphs of others, and thus achieve a kinder and more complex understanding of themselves.”

Stephanie Cronin, a Math teacher at Seward High School, was named alternate for the Alaska Teacher of the Year 2017. Ms. Cronin, has taught for 19 years, 17 in her present position. Her passion is to show students the beauty and possibilities of mathematics. She holds a bachelor’s degree in Economics from the University of Minnesota and three degrees from UAA. Contact the Program Coordinator, Cecilia Miller, for more information.

<https://education.alaska.gov/RecognitionPrograms/TOY/>

ALASKA PRINCIPALS OF THE YEAR:

The **Alaska Association of Elementary School Principals (AAESP)** announced that **Kate LaPlaunt**, principal of Pearl Creek Elementary School in Fairbanks, has been selected by her peers as the Alaska National Distinguished Principal for 2016.

The **Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals (AASSP)** selected **Shaun Kraska**, of West Valley High School in the Fairbanks, and **Jeff Nelles**, of Wasilla High School as the 2016 Alaska Secondary School Principal and Assistant Principal of the Year, respectively. Ms. Kraska has served as West Valley principal for eight years. Mr. Nelles has been an AP at Wasilla High for the last six year.

ALASKA SUPERINTENDENT OF THE YEAR:

The **Alaska Superintendents Association (ASA)** announced that Kodiak Island Borough School District Superintendent, **Stewart McDonald**, has been selected by his peers as Alaska’s 2017 Superintendent of the Year. Mr. McDonald became KIBSD superintendent in 2008 and has served in a variety of education positions for the last 24 years. He holds a bachelor’s degree in education from the University of North Florida and an M.Ed. from UAA.

Breach of contract continues to be the single-most prevalent complaint that the PTPC sees. When you sign a contract, you are making a commitment to not only the school district, but to your students, to remain for the entire school year. Leaving before the school year is over causes difficulties for the school district as well as disruption for your students. If extenuating circumstances come up that necessitate you leaving employment mid-year, please talk with the district office early on. However, districts are under no obligation to release you from your contract. Typical sanction imposed by the Commission for a breach of contract violation is a one-year suspension of your certificate. In addition, some district impose their own penalties (generally financial) for breach of 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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