ISER’s work in education funding & teacher retention

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Alaska Municipal League
ISER has been studying Alaska’s teacher workforce and education system for over 50 years.

Institute of Social & Economic Research
- Alaska-focused
- Nonpartisan
- Policy-focused
- Intended to help people understand social and economic systems

Center for Alaska Education Policy Research
- Education pathways & workforce development
- Teacher workforce
- Arctic, rural, & Indigenous education

Education pathways & workforce development
Teacher workforce
Arctic, rural, & Indigenous education
Grounding today’s presentation

Part 1:
Education spending

Part 2:
Teacher workforce

When you get a lot of data, and you find the time to really look at them, you start to see that the world is complicated.

- Matt Berman

For every complex problem, there is an answer that is clear, simple, and wrong.

- H. L. Mencken
Part 1: Education spending
1. Alaska’s per-pupil spending is not keeping up with other states.


ALASKA'S AVERAGE PER-PUPIL SPENDING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>% Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RAW DOLLARS</td>
<td>$17,838</td>
<td>$18,394</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADJUSTED TO ANCHORAGE</td>
<td>$14,853</td>
<td>$15,290</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADJUSTED TO NATIONAL AVERAGE</td>
<td>$11,997</td>
<td>$12,281</td>
<td>-7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NATIONAL AVERAGE: $13,187

% = DIFFERENCE FROM NATIONAL AVERAGE
2. Many of Alaska’s education costs are beyond education policy.

Healthcare, geography, and energy influence Alaska’s education spending.

**Ed costs are not inflated from...**
- High per-pupil teacher salaries
  - On average, Alaska teacher salaries about 15% below where they should be*
  - “Right” salary varies by community & working conditions there
- Extra contributions to retirement systems

**Evidence that costs are higher due to...**
- Small schools
- Healthcare
- Energy
- Geographic costs
  - Housing and building costs
  - “Basket of goods” reality
Part 2: The teacher workforce
3. Teacher shortages are a national concern.

Alaska hires teachers in a national market.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Demand</th>
<th>Supply</th>
<th>Turnover</th>
<th>Competitiveness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>Strong economy creates increased demand for teachers in other states</td>
<td>Decreased interest in teaching profession</td>
<td>High turnover in profession in general</td>
<td>Strong economy allows other states to offer better compensation packages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Decreasing enrollments and graduates in teacher preparation programs</td>
<td>In good economy, highly qualified teachers find jobs in private sector or other fields</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AK</td>
<td>AK’s demand for teachers has been steady for past decade</td>
<td>AK-prepared teacher supply has been flat since at least 2008</td>
<td>About 22% of AK’s teachers turn over annually</td>
<td>In AK’s fiscal crisis, teacher salaries and benefits have not increased commensurate to other states</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Most of AK’s new teacher hires come from the lower 48</td>
<td>UAA, AK’s largest teacher preparation program, suspended admissions in 2019</td>
<td>Turnover is higher in rural and low-income schools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Teacher turnover is expensive.

It costs districts over $20k to replace a teacher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Per teacher cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Separation</td>
<td>Administrative tasks, technology, physical plant</td>
<td>$2,449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment</td>
<td>Job fairs (including travel), advertising</td>
<td>$1,910*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiring</td>
<td>Applications, interviews, background checks, HR</td>
<td>$4,902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation &amp; training</td>
<td>New teacher orientation, mentoring, PD</td>
<td>$11,170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>Coursework, field placement, certification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher productivity</td>
<td>Student learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. There are lots of reasons why teachers leave.

Some conditions can be improved with policy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School-community relationships</th>
<th>Working conditions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Communication</td>
<td>• Physical plant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Support</td>
<td>• Class size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Parent engagement</td>
<td>• Workload</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community characteristics</th>
<th>Salary &amp; compensation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Transportation</td>
<td>• Pay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Amenities</td>
<td>• Benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Climate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| School & district administration | |
|----------------------------------| • Support |
|                                  | • Feedback |
|                                  | • Recognition |
6. Recruitment and retention challenges both contribute to workforce shortages, but require different solutions.

Berman, M., & DeFeo, D. J. (2023). Equitable compensation to attract and retain qualified teachers in high-need Alaska public schools. *Educational Policy*
Improved compensation will *help* recruitment & retention.

- But we can’t fix the problem with salary and benefits alone.
- Some benefits are more effective for attracting new teachers, others for retaining current teachers.
  - Housing
  - Personal leave days
- Districts attempt to substitute benefits for wages when they can’t raise salaries.
  - Benefits cost money too, but sometimes their value to teachers is higher than their cost.
Wrapping up
Solutions will need to be multi-faceted and inclusive.

The problem itself is:
- Complex
- Systemic
- Highly variable
- Characterized by distributed responsibility

Thinking about solutions:
- There’s no single solution.
  - Some solutions are objectively “good” or “bad” for the outcome.
  - Some solutions create new tensions.
- Efforts will need to be coordinated.
  - Communities
  - Schools
  - Districts
  - State
- The effects of our efforts will not be immediate.
- We can’t afford not to.
It’s not this simple.
Wicked problems require multifaceted solutions.
Dialogue and collaboration maximize our impact.
Thank you, questions, follow-up

Dayna

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