



Andreafski High School, St. Mary's, AK

Photograph by DEED Commissioner Michael Johnson

# **ALASKA PROFESSIONAL TEACHING PRACTICES COMMISSION**

## **ANNUAL REPORT 2021**

# ***ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PROFESSIONAL TEACHING PRACTICES COMMISSION***

## INTRODUCTION

The Alaska State Professional Teaching Practices Commission (PTPC) submits its report for Fiscal Year 2021. 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.” Since FY 2016 the PTPC has funded solely by 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, 2020, through June 30, 2021. It is prepared on behalf of the Commission by the Executive Director, Melody Mann.

## 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, student teachers, and instructors in institutions of higher learning. The Commission's order is final in disciplinary matters regarding a teacher. Before the certificate of an administrator is sanctioned, the Commissioner of the Department 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:

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.*

## 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.*

## 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 investigates.

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, an administrative law judge from the Office of Administrative Hearings, presides. The hearing is held in accordance with the Alaska Administrative Procedure Act. All hearings are open to the public.

## ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEWS

Administrative Reviews are held to evaluate PTPC staff's decisions to dismiss a case. There were nine (9) Administrative Reviews held this year. Eight of nine cases the Commission voted unanimously to uphold PTPC staff's decision to dismiss the cases. One case was investigated further. An Administrative Review can only be requested by the Complainant.

## 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 (also province in Canada, or U.S. territory) is recorded. This database is not accessible by the public. This database has recently been made available to school districts for a nominal fee.

## INQUIRIES

### Applications for Certification

PTPC staff reviewed one hundred twenty-five (125) applications for certification in which there were state or federal fingerprint checks indicating criminal charges, or in which one of the character questions (background information) was checked "yes." This was a decrease of thirty from last year and below the average of 155 over the last ten years. This includes initial, renewal/reinstatement, and student teaching applications. Seventy (70) applicants divulged convictions (or other actions) on their applications and subsequently those applications were approved or required a brief follow-up with the applicant before being approved.

Fifty-five (55) applicants for certification failed to divulge past charges for criminal violations or action taken against their certificate in another state. Forty-three were not convicted. Of these, twelve (12) were convicted and did not divulge. 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 fifty-five applicants were eventually approved.

### Inquiries from other states and Canada

PTPC staff responded to three (3) 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.

FY 2021 IN REVIEW  
*(July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021)*

The Commission met in general session three times. Fifteen (15) educators were sanctioned in FY 2021. This is above the yearly average of 13.3 educators sanctioned over the last fifteen years.

DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS:

At the **October 19, 2020**, meeting the following actions were taken by the Commission:

Case 14-50: Commission ordered the **revocation for life** of the expired Alaska Initial Teaching Certificate of **Jeremy T. Anderson**.

Case 19-26: Commission ordered a **reprimand** of the expired Alaska Initial Teaching Certificate of **Steven R. Weber**.

Case 19-42: Commission ordered a **warning with conditions** to an educator who holds an Alaska Professional Teaching Certificate.

Case 20-20: Commission ordered a **reprimand** of the Alaska Administrative and Professional Teaching Certificates of **Michael J. Rath**.

Case 20-34: Commission ordered the **one-year suspension with conditions** of the Alaska Professional Teaching Certificate of **John Cochrane**, effective February 25, 2020.

Case 20-36: Commission ordered the **one-year suspension** of the Alaska Initial Teaching Certificate of **Teresa Wishart**, effective February 29, 2020.

Case 20-44: Commission ordered the **voluntary surrender** of the Alaska Limited Teaching Certificate of **Paul B. Brodale**.

Case 21-03: Commission ordered a **warning** to an educator who holds an Alaska Professional Teaching Certificate.

At the **January 28, 2021**, meeting the following actions were taken by the Commission:

Case 20-23 Commission ordered the revocation for life of the Professional Teaching Certificate of **James R. Smith**.

Case 20-27 Commission ordered a one-year suspension effective October 23, 2020, of the expired Initial Teaching Certificate of **Jennifer G. Bates**.

Case 20-32 Commission order a **one-year suspension** effective February 25, 2020 of the Provisional Administrative and Teaching Certificates of **Thomas H. Graves**.

Case 20-33 Commission ordered the **reprimand** of the Professional Teaching Certificate of **Dennis Blackburn**.

At the **April 15, 2021**, meeting the following actions were taken by the Commission:

Case 21-09 Commission ordered the **reprimand** of the Initial Teaching Certificate of **Trevor McGrady**.

Case 21-13 Commission ordered a **warning** of the Initial Teaching Certificate of an educator.

Case 21-14 Commission ordered the **warning** of the Administrative and Special Services Certificates of an educator.

## PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS

### Presentations

Virtual presentations on professionalism, professional ethics, and the role of the Commission were given to many educator groups around the state. Staff presented to Yupiit SD in early September and then to North West Arctic SD a week later. Staff presented to about 25 of 50 principals through the Alaska Staff Development Network in November. The presentation was recorded. Staff presented to a group of aspiring superintendents at UAS. Staff presented to Bering Straits Borough SD in February, discussing the Code of Ethics and professionalism, whether delivering instruction in person or teaching virtually.

### Newsletter

Newsletters are not required to be published by PTPC. Two newsletters were produced in Winter and Spring of 2020. They were distributed electronically to all school districts (through the superintendent) and to other education stakeholders in Alaska. These newsletters were also distributed as part of the Department of Education and Early Development's weekly *Information Exchange Newsletter*. They are also posted to the [PTPC homepage](http://education.alaska.gov/ptpc/) (<http://education.alaska.gov/ptpc/>). Paper copies of the newsletter are available upon request.

### PTPC Handbook

The PTPC Handbook for Alaska Educators includes the Alaska statute that created the Commission, the Code of Ethics, and Complaint Screening Guidelines, the investigative procedures of the Commission, Alaska Statutes and Regulations, the Complaint Form. Find the Handbook at the [PTPC Homepage](http://education.alaska.gov/ptpc/) (<http://education.alaska.gov/ptpc/>). The Handbook was revised in 2020.

## STATUTES AND REGULATIONS

### 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.

### TEACHING PROFESSION (AS 14.20.370)

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

### EFFECT OF THE CODE OF ETHICS (AS 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)

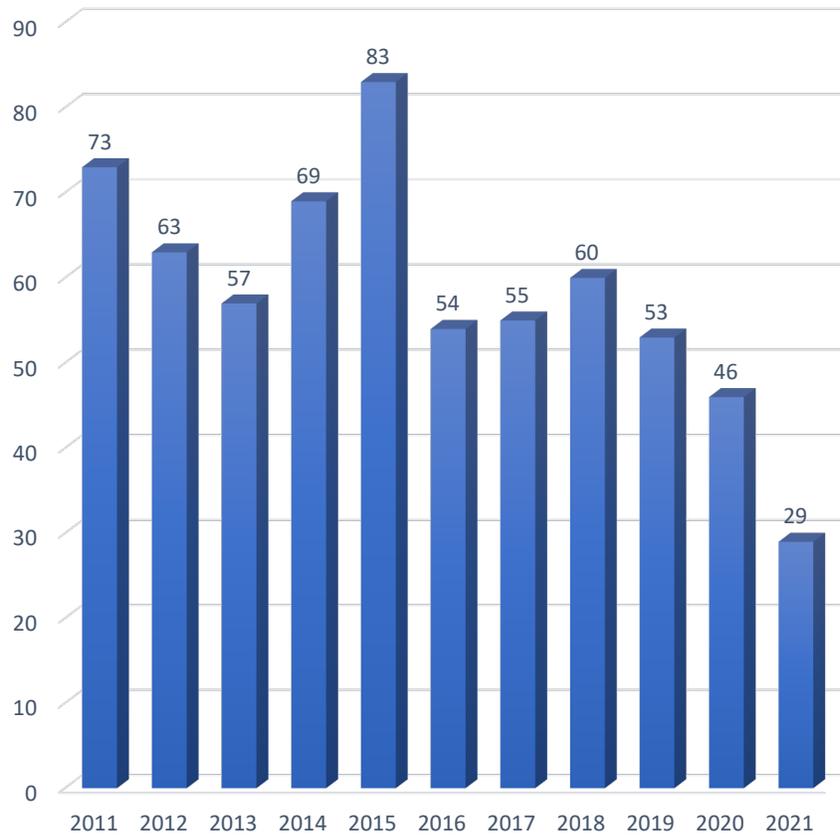
The Commission staff provides copies of the Code of Ethics of the Education Profession upon requests from any Alaskan.

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

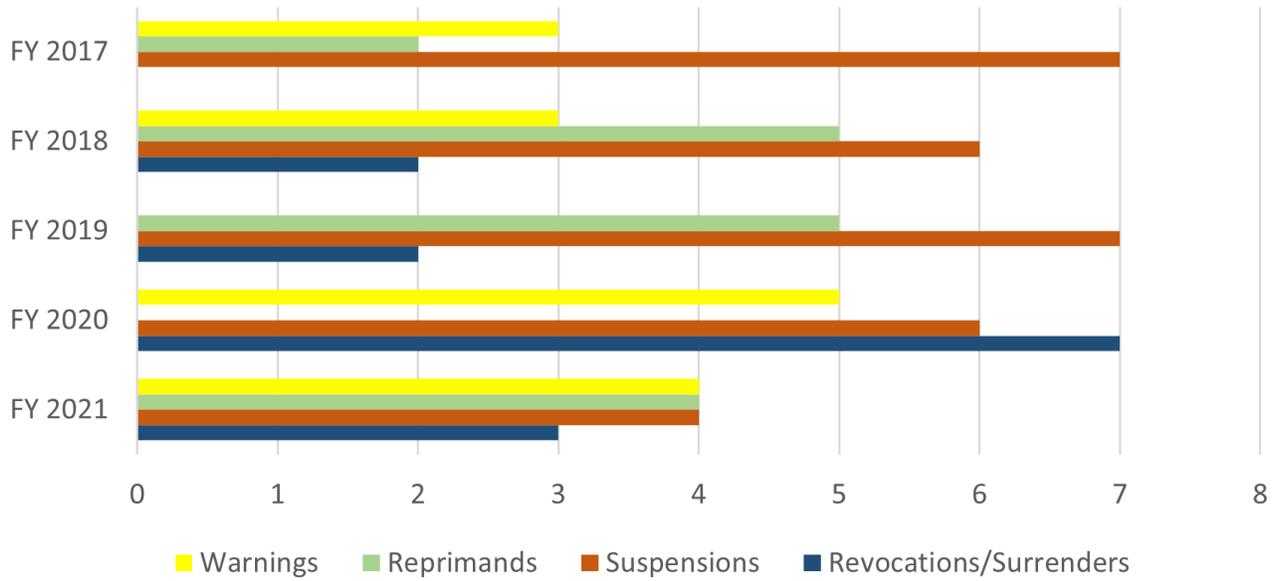
The Code of Ethics requires that knowledge of physical abuse of a student or sexual conduct with a student by an educator must be reported to the Commission.

## YEAR BY YEAR COMPARISONS

### PTPC CASES INVESTIGATED BY YEAR



## Sanctions ordered by year



**FY2021 Financial Report (July 1, 2020 –June 30, 2021)**

	<b>Authorization</b>	<b>Actual Disbursements</b>	<b>Encumbrances</b>	<b>Authorization Balance</b>
<b>Personal Services</b>	\$163,639.00	\$148,206.40	\$0.00	\$15,432.60
<b>Travel</b>	\$4,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$4,000.00
<b>Contractual Services</b>	\$83,361.00	\$39,871.99	\$0.00	\$43,489.01
<b>Commodities</b>	\$2,600.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$2,600.00
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$253,600.00</b>	<b>\$188,078.39</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$65,521.61</b>

Personal Services: Salaries (including benefits)

Travel: Executive Director, Commissioners

- Conferences
- Commission Meetings
- Presentations
- Investigations

Contractual: Interagency Services

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

Commodities:

- Business Supplies
- Equipment and Furniture
- Information Technology Equipment

### Current PTPC Members

MEMBER	DATE APPOINTED	REAPPOINTED	TERM EXPIRES
<i>Adam Reid</i> , Vice Chair Teacher Representative Anchorage (ASD)	04/01/2020		03/01/2022
<i>Danette Peterson</i> Teacher Representative Fairbanks (FNSBSD)	03/08/2021		03/01/2024
<i>Jennifer Stafford</i> Teacher Representative Matanuska-Susitna (MSBSD)	10/21/2020		03/01/2023
<i>Diane Kardash</i> Higher Education Representative (UAF)	05/26/2017	03/01/2018	03/01/2021
<i>Kimberly Bergey</i> Principal Representative Yukon Koyukuk (YKSD)	06/25/2021		03/01/2024
<i>Janine Todd</i> Teacher Representative Delta Junction (DGS)	07/12/2018	03/01/2019	03/01/2022
<i>Deborah Riddle</i> Division Operations Manager, Innovation and Education Excellence, Juneau (DEED)	07/20/2021		03/01/2024
<i>Jamie Burgess</i> , Secretary Superintendent Representative Nome (NPS)	04/01/2020		03/01/2023
<i>Lem Wheelles</i> , Chair Teacher Representative Anchorage (ASD)	5/21/2019		03/01/2022
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<i>Melody Mann</i> Executive Director 550 West 7 <sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 1240 Anchorage, AK 99501 <a href="mailto:melody.mann@alaska.gov">melody.mann@alaska.gov</a> 907-269-6579	06/01/2018		06/30/2022